CHRISTMAS ISSUE 1970

CALVINIST-CONTACT

CHRISTIAN WEEKLY

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Jan.
Rev. J. W. Van Weelden
17 Tweedsmuir Ave. E.
Chatham, Ont.

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

It's Christmas again. A time to rejoice and reflect on the greatest gift to mankind, God's only Son.

The angels at Bethlehem understood the importance of this great event, when they sang their "glorias" across the heavens.

Having served God's Son in His eternal home, they knew something about the significance of this drastic step of entering our world as a human being. We don't know much more about angels, but can understand their excitement and awe when they learned that God would become a man. It's possible that not since the Creation they had been so exuberant. After all the birth of the Saviour marked the turning point in history; God's divine intervention to straighten out what man had messed up many, many centuries before.

The angels told the shepherds of Bethlehem, who went to see, who believed and then told everyone within earshot that the Messiah had finally come.

When the Messiah grew up he taught his followers about [illegible] life, the way of life He called the Kingdom of Heaven. [illegible]gh parables, proclamations and a life of service He [illegible]e groundwork for a worldwide, revolutionary movem[illegible] that would return sinful men to their former glory: as children and co-workers of God.

His movement went beyond the boundaries of the Roman provinces of the Middle East in which he worked. First it went through the empire, then to the Barbaric countries of central and Northern Europe. From there it conquered the world, until today we find believers throughout the world.

It seems significant that during this century the Church has grown with leaps and bounds in "foreign countries such as Mexico, Korea, Bolivia and Nigeria. It shows clearly that God's movement cannot be stopped by the narrow boundaries of the industrial, sophisticated nations.

It is refreshing to see that the childlike acceptance of God's love, and the simple obedience to His will by recent converts in these countries is so tremendously blessed by God's Spirit.

Perhaps what we need in the pressure-cooker of complicated western living is a return to the simple astonishment of a child at God's marvellous love.

And what better time to begin than at Christmas!

John Knight

A Christmas Meditation

"Let us Go...and See"

Luke 2:15 —
"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened . . ." (RSV)

II Cor. 3:18 —
"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (KJV)

When the editor asked me to write a Christmas meditation for CALVINIST-CONTACT I thought of a particular lady. She had been assigned to make the Christmas essay for the Ladies' Society. "I much rather would make one for Pentecost," she told me. And she further explained, it was not that she preferred the Pentecost event of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the Christmas event of the coming of Jesus Christ. But, AS FAR AS MAKING ESSAYS WAS CONCERNED, you could do much more with Pentecost than with Christmas.

(Continued on page 3)

Beelden van en uit NEDERLAND

★ ★

Gevaren Driehoeken en Bermpalen

Het is niet windstil gebleven in de Gereformeerde Kerken, al valt ook niet te spreken van een storm die de binten doet kraken. Blijkbaar wacht men af. Wel heeft hier en daar een enkel lid de kerk verlaten om over te stappen naar de Christelijke Gereformerde of de Vrijgemaakte kerken, doch van een exodus is geen sprake.

De reacties in de kerkelijke bladen zijn wel diep ernstig, maar niet op "breken" ingesteld. Zo Ds. L. H. Kwast in de Friese Kerkbode in antwoord op een ingezonden stuk:

"Maar laat ík de heer Volkers en anderen die zijn gevoelen (onze kerk is een modaliteiten kerk geworden . . ., met dit synodebesluit is de afbraak van onze kerk begonnen) delen, het alternatief vóórhouden. Dat alternatief had bestaan in een regelrechte **kerkscheuring**: de zoveelste in de gereformeerde (kerk-)geschiedenis. En de vraag is maar: **Waren de Gereformeerde Kerken daaraan in dit stadium toe?** Stonden bij alle verschil van inzicht en bij de onderscheiden uitlegging van Genesis 2 en 3 de fundamenten van de kerk linea recta **op het spel?**

. . . Kerkscheuring en oorlog hebben één ding gemeen: ze zijn een allerlaatst geneesmiddel.

. . . Want zou in déze fase door de synode zijn doorgetast, dan was het niet maar alleen om de persoon van enkele hoogleraren gegaan. Dan zouden nú al de stukken van het Kerkelijk Kabinet ons om de oren vliegen."

Ds. Van Mechelen in "Waarheid en Eenheid": "Wel bezorgd maar niet paniekerig doen."

Het Friesch Dagblad: "De Gereformeerde Kerken zijn van de zaak niet àf: dat is helder als glas. . . . Tussen kerkelijke ruimte en leervrijheid is nog wel een beetje verschil. Er staan gevaren driehoeken op de weg van de Gereformeerde kerken. Helaas moesten ze geplaatst worden. Maar er zijn ook nog bermpalen." Op zaterdag 12 december wordt in Zwolle een samenkomst gehouden van Confessioneel Beraad, waarin Dr. P. G. Kunst, de praeses van de Synode, een toelichting zal geven op de besluiten van de Synode. In Rotterdam vergaderen op die dag de "verontrusten".

Gambetta zei in 1877: Il faudra se soumettre ou se démettre, (men zal zich moeten onderwerpen of ontslag moeten nemen).

De vrees is niet ongegrond, dat het in de toekomst ook in de Geref. Kerken kiezen of delen wordt. Wil men althans **Gereformeerde** Kerken blijven.

* * *

Op 12 december vinden nog meer belangrijke vergaderingen plaats. De drie Christelijke politieke partijen komen afzonderlijk bijeen om een gezamenlijk urgentie-program voor de verkiezing van leden van de Tweede Kamer in het aanstaande voorjaar vast te stellen. Men (K.V.P., A.R. en C.H.) gaat dan met eigen lijsten, maar met één program de strijd in. Daarnaast hebben de partijen nog hun eigen uitgewerkte programma's boekdelen vol goede bedoelingen, wensen en eisen. Eén punt is uit het concept-urgentie program verdwenen, nl. dat de Tweede Kamer een aanbeveling zou doen inzake de te benoemen Kabinets-formateur. De "rode" freule, Jonkvrouw Mr. C. W. J. Wttewaal van Stoetwegen (25 jaar lid van de Tweede Kamer) had daar in de C.H. Unie-raad een stokje voor gestoken. Zij vond terecht, dat daarmee een der prerogatieven van de Kroon werd aangetast. Het is de Koningin toch, die bij een Kabinetsformatie, haar raadslieden gehoord, een formateur of een informateur aanwijst. Kreeg zij namen door de meerderheid van de Tweede Kamer op een presenteerblaadje aangeboden, dan bleef er van eigen keuze niets meer over. De beide andere partijen hebben nu dat punt laten vallen. De P.v.d.A. wil nog verder gaan en de formateur door de kiezers laten aanwijzen.

Het program van de "nieuwe-oude" coalitie is geen goedkoop program. De wensen zijn o.m.:

uitbreiding woningbouw en krotopruiming;

optrekking van de A.O.W. tot de grens van het minimumloon (f 157 per week), ongeveer f 2000 per jaar meer dan thans wordt uitgekeerd;

opvoering ontwikkelingshulp (thans reeds 950 miljoen gulden);

versterking van de defensie;

verbetering onderwijs en hulp aan kleine zelfstandigen.

Dan nog extra heffingen voor een beter leefklimaat en milieubescherming.

Gevolg: verhoging omzetbelasting, vennootschapsbelasting, successierechten, vermogenswinstbelasting. Bij een opiniepeiling bleek ongeveer de helft van de ondervraagden voor belastingverlaging. Maar de partijen gaan door tegen elkaar op te bieden. Rehabeam's vinger wordt steeds dikker.

* * *

Loonpauze of niet?

De beslissing moet nog vallen.

De Sociaal-Economische Raad kwam niet tot een eenstemmig advies. De Regering moet dus zelfstandig beslissen. Helemaal homogeen schijnt men niet te zijn. Minister Roolvink wil zich niet weer branden door een maatregel te nemen, die later onhoudbaar blijkt. Wel is men het er over eens, dat het reëel te verhogen loon niet boven de 2% mag stijgen. Maar hoe het te realiseren bij een krappe arbeidsmarkt en stijgende prijzen?

Geruchten over aftreden van minister Roolvink zijn inmiddels weer weggedampt.

* * *

Wat [illegible]e hoofdpunten zijn bij de[illegible]sstrijd? Inflatiebestrij[illegible]papier!), [illegible]derwijs, de[illegible]sie? De Nato-ra[illegible] gaderde in Den Haag en maakte van West-Berlijn een test-case inzake de bedoelingen van Sovjet-Rusland. Ontspanning of verscherping van de verhoudingen? De Nederlandse defensie-inspanning (mankracht, luchtafweer, tankbewapening, communicatie-middelen) moet vergroot. Het Nederlandse volk staat er lauw tegenover, de politieke partijen evenzo. Blijkbaar heeft 1940 ons niets geleerd. Een nieuw rapport van de A.R. Partij vermeldt twee tegengestelde standpunten. Sommigen willen het atoom-wapen als "zonde" afzweren en desnoods daarom de NATO verlaten.

De dreiging van China (achter elke glimlach een dolk) en van de Sovjet (wereldheerschappij) schijnt hen niet van bepaalde theologische constructies te kunnen afbrengen.

Maar deze "duiven" veranderen ineens in "haviken" als het Zuid-Afrika betreft. Minister Bakker, die een reis naar Zuid-Afrika maakte, en hoewel tegenstander van apartheid, ook wat goeds van de Regering-Vorster durfde te zeggen, kreeg de wind van voren, in en buiten het Parlement.

Tromp en De Ruyter moesten in hun tijd al waarschuwen tegen verwaarlozing van de zeemacht met de dreiging: "mettertijt en come te vervallen onder de slavernij en de Tirannije van den onversoenlijcken vijant den Coninck van Hispanigien."

Die "slavernij en tirannije" lijkt een zomerbuitje vergeleken bij de bedreiging, die geheel de vrije westerse wereld en inzonderheid Nederlend met zijn machtige havens en uitzicht naar de wereldzeeën, vandaag boven het hoofd hangt.

In dit opzicht gaan we geen blij Nieuwjaar tegemoet. De gevaren driehoeken zijn talrijker dan de bermpalen!

Cn.

Church Announcements

CHR. REF. CHURCH

Accepted

to First Calgary, Alta., Rev. Henry Wildeboer of Sunnyside, Washington, U.S.A.

CAN. REF. CHURCHES

Declined

for Abbotsford, B.C., Rev. P. Kingma of Smithers, B.C.

for Lincoln, Ont. Rev. A. Geelhoed of Hasselt (Holland).

EMERITATION
REV. H. NUMAN

Classis Huron, in session on Sept. 16, 1970 in Galt, Ont. granted honourable emeritation to Rev. H. Numan from the Collingwood Chr. Ref. Church as of Jan. 1st, 1971.

Rev. and Mrs. Numan plan to stay in Collingwood, Ont. until spring, after which they intend to take up residence in Hamilton.

Opportunity to share

"The purpose of the service this evening is to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lord of life. There is no area of human existence or thought that should not be brought under His control. One such area in which the Christian needs to take a second look is the area of education. In a world estranged from God the importance of a Christian education cannot be overlooked."

Does this sound familiar to you? No, it was not on a bulletin from one of our Reformed Churches, but it appeared on the bulletin of the Bethel Baptist Church in Strathroy, Ontario. The Strathroy Christian School movement has come into contact with new events. This Baptist church had invited us over for presenting a positive Christian education worship during their evening worship service due to a growing interest concerning a God-centered day school education. The theme, chosen by the Rev. Mr. Wm. Currie, pastor of the church, was called: "Christian Education in a Secular Society". A panel of three men active in Christian education presented the program. Mr. W. Drost, principal of the London Christian High School spoke on and answered questions about "The **Philosophy** of a Christian Education"; Mr. J. Top, principal of the Chr. High School in Toronto dealt with: "The **Quality** of Christian Education". Mr. J. De Voest, president of the local Chr. Schoolboard introduced the topic: "The **Practice** of Christian Education".

During this evening we heard the honest questions which fellow Christians are struggling with. "Do Christian Schools foster isolationism? Is the cost of Christian education realistic enough to allow participation of people of all income levels? Do the present Christian Schools, unintentionally perhaps, promote a specific ethnic sociological, cultural and ecclesiological climate? Lively discussions were held particularly after the service was over.

This was a wonderful opportunity to share our concern for children of Christian homes. We found that our fellow Christians are very sincere in their concern about education. We must continue to discuss extensively and intensively our mutual concern, and are searching for ways of implementing this concern in effectual ways, and deepen contacts by other, practical follow-up programs. It is amazing how refreshing those honest confrontations can be. It is heartwarming to discover that concern for Christian education reaches farther than specific Reformed constituancies. In our area this evening has brought us closer to our fellow Christians and has caused us to take a second, yet deeper look at what Christian education is.

Rev. Peter Sluys,
Pastor East Chr. Ref. Church,
Strathroy, Ont.

TRINITY STUDENTS TO ATTEND 1970 UNIVERSITY MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

Approximately twenty students from Trinity Christian College plan to attend the University Msisionary Conference, sponsored by the Inter-varsity Press, to be held in Urbana, Illinois. The Inter-varsity Press is an intercollegiate organization interested in evangelism on college campuses.

The conference which is held once every three years, will begin on December 31. Several evangelical leaders, including David Howard, John Scott and Tom Skinner will speak on topics ranging from student power and world evangelism to the Christian's response to the racial crisis in the United States. Seminars and discussions will also be included in the conference where different openings within that area of missions will be explored. A computer will also be available which will give the conferees information on personnel needs in any of these different areas.

Still

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Inplaats van kaarten.
S.BAKKER Sr. en
Mrs. T. HOEKSTRA
wensen familie, vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en Nieuwjaar toe.
R.R. 2, Wingham, Ont.

Al onze familie, vrienden en kennissen een echt Kerstfeest en gezegend Nieuwjaar toegewenst van

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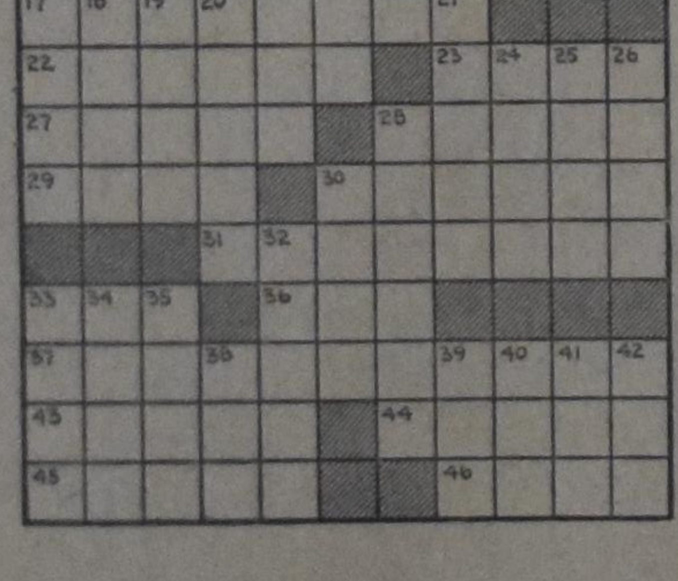
"We must never forget that, in the long run, a democracy is judged by the way the majority treats the minority."

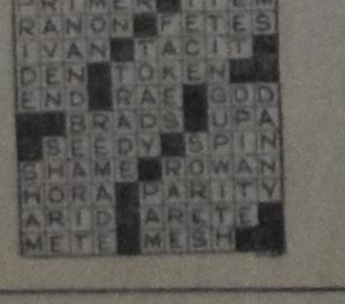
— Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1. Yucatan tribesman
5. Out of earshot
10. Choose
12. Original
13. Enchanting fountain (2 wds.)
15. Born (Fr.)
16. Bounding main
17. Whimsical words for water
22. Professional life
23. Guide
27. Court happening
28. Swiss city
29. Chair
30. Musical composition
31. Get in ——: be in trouble (2 wds.)
33. Encountered
36. Prize piece
37. Famous actress-singer (2 wds.)
43. Plumber's device
44. Involving warships
45. Abhorred
46. Good number

DOWN
1. Tabby's cry
2. Mohammedan name
3. Pleasing answer
4. Frau's "alas"
5. Theatrical backer
6. Porker's mom
7. Folk singer Burl
8. Cross out
9. Fitzgerald
11. Christmas tree adornment
14. Approach
17. Deeds
18. Have the nerve
19. "Caro Nome," e.g.
20. Irish county
21. Girl's name
24. Part of Q.E.D.
25. Price paid
26. Beloved
28. Archer
30. Ragout
32. Eyed amorously
33. Network
34. Spirit lamp
35. "—— Old Feeling"
38. Piece out
39. Sandy's headgear
40. Wagnerian lady
41. Managed
42. Cunning





SOLUTION to previous Crossword Puzzle

Christmas Concert

BY

Chr. Music Society "Euphonia", Toronto
Chr. Chamber Orchestra "Pro Musica", Toronto
Chr. Mixed Choir "Praise the Lord", Toronto
Chr. Children's Choir "The Lord is my Shepherd", Toronto

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
LEENDERT KOOIJ, A.R.C.T.

Newmarket: Saturday, December 19, 1970 at 8:00 p.m. In the Christian Reformed Church, Davis Drive.

Toronto: Saturday, (2nd Christmas Day) December 26, 1970 at 8:00 p.m. In the Christian Reformed Church, Albion Rd., Rexdale.

★ A beautiful Program — Bring the Family.
★ Come sing along — Music by: Jan Zwart, Mozart, Handel, Aumann a.o.

ALL WELCOME — COLLECTION
COME EARLY

CALVINIST - CONTACT
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"Let us Go . . . and See"

(continued from front page)

The lady was right. There is not much, especially nothing new or original, that WE can say when we study the Christmas account. God has said it all in one inarticulate cry of the newborn Child. A message so simple, so radical, so original in its delivery, the delivery of a baby, that all our essays and sermons turn pale and sterile. Christmas is no time for essays and sermons. Rather, as the shepherds experienced, we have to go over to Bethlehem with the angels' song still ringing in our ears and simply "SEE THIS THING THAT HAS HAPPENED" so that we may return to our everyday life, again as the shepherds experienced, "GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN." Yes, even our "songs of praise" can at times become a distraction from really seeing the greatness of what God has done. I think of that moment when "THERE WAS SILENCE IN HEAVEN FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR" (Rev. 8:1). The famous Dutch pulpiteer, Dr. Okke Jager, who as few preachers is privileged to witness the powerful effect of his sermons on his hearers, yet confesses that there are times when the Scripture text is so movingly simple, so majestically forceful, that he feels like beginning his sermon by saying: "Congregation, let us be silent . . ."

I hear already somebody say, if you feel this way, why yet present this Christmas meditation? Precisely to ask in all the hustle and bustle of the Christmas season for silence. Christmas celebrations have a weird, spooky sense of unreality about them. All at once, in the midst of our violent times of civil disorder, strikes, fierce competition, petty grievances, nervous tension, loneliness, we stop — open our hymnbooks, smile at each other, send cards, give presents, while the radio stations fill the sky with songs of "Peace on Earth." An eery fantasy world takes over, be it only for a few days, a world that is in fact "out of this world." Our Christmas essays and meditations may be fancy, yet they too, perhaps especially so, tend to have this same artificial glow as blinking Christmas tree lights.

Silence, please! Let us repent of our Christmas activities and be PASSIVE in the way that the shepherds said: "let us go . . . and SEE." In all the unbelievable unreality of our present world, of which our Christmas celebrations are the supreme manifestation, the original Christmas event stands out in stark reality. Out of our play-acting in the twilight of vain shadows we are summoned to witness God in the flashing light of real life step on the scene of our human history. This God, Whom we respectfully adorn within the secluded area of Heavenly Splendor, in a most unorthodox and scandalous fashion breaks our religious rules of etiquette (we on earth and God in heaven). Not just "on earth" in a very general, mystical way, but there at that precise geographical location: BETHLEHEM, for real historical people like the shepherds, like you and me, to see: "let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened . . ."

Do we make such busy fuss of the Christmas season to really see what has happened in Bethlehem or are we running away in to the opposite direction? Is God coming too close in Bethlehem? Too close for comfort: under our skin, in our flesh? That is the scandal of the Gospel of Christ: a God that is too close, filling all of our life span from birth (Bethlehem) to death (Calvary). A God too close: the Jews cry blasphemy, the Greeks mock foolishness, the shepherds SEE and return glorifying and praising God.

You and I must see the real Christmas thing that has happened. What happened there has not just become a thing of the past, 2000 years ago, in a distant little place, Bethlehem. We must see it not as a matter only of historical interest. We must see it in OUR Bethlehem, our place in life, small and ordinary as it may be. We can only see the reality of Christmas if we see God come to my place, my flesh; when God comes "too close for comfort." Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, did not look on from a safe distance but saw and felt the Lord come into her own life, into her own flesh. She started to grow, felt God kick, cried in pain and laughed in joy at the sight of her Saviour (was it that real?). And Mary's joy of being delivered is contagious to all who really see this thing that has happened: the shepherds return glorifying and praising God.

You want to know how you can really see this thing that has happened? It is by praying a particular kind of prayer. Not the type of prayer where we try having God see things OUR way, but rather, the very opposite type of prayer (true prayer), where God is having us see things HIS way. Just as Christmas is not the message that our flesh has taken possession of God, but the opposite, God has taken possession of our flesh. So the true Christmas prayer is to say like a child: "O, Come to My Heart, Lord Jesus." It is the simple prayer of submitting ourselves, like Mary, in body and soul to God. As Dr. Oswald Chambers has said: "Every man is meant to be the 'Bethlehem'' of the Son of God by the generative power of Redemption . . . Are we willing to submit to the 'new man' that is formed in us until our natural life is transfigured by His personal indwelling?" The apostle Paul was teaching the people of God the kind of prayer that makes us pregnant with the fulness of God in us: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . . and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:17-19). With this true prayer of submission to God's will to dwell in us we see the glory of Christmas. This prayer, rather than changing THINGS changes US. With respect to that marvellous secret of what true prayer does to us the well-known theologian, Dr. Emil Brunner, refers to some other words of the apostle Paul in II Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Says Dr. Brunner: "To offer our heart with unveiled face to the glory of God in Jesus Christ — this is genuine prayer." This is our Christmas prayer to be prayed throughout the year: to offer our heart, our flesh and blood existence, as a Bethlehem to God. Then as Christ grows and is formed in us we become a reflection of the true Christmas lights of God's glory as we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." Are these words too high? Of course not! A little child can reach it by bowing down and simply pray: "O, Come to My Heart, Lord Jesus."

Peter L. VanKatwijk

Amidst a confused world,
Amidst growing anarchy,
Amidst many who lose their faith,
We kneel before Thee.

Seeing Thy great compassion,
Seeing Thy marvellous love,
Seeing Thy renewing grace,
We adore Thee.

Use us as a mirror of Thy love,
Use us as a herald of Thy coming,
Use us as faithful servants,
We pray Thee.

WITH WARM WISHES

from

De Boer's

TORONTO

Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall His empire be . . .

GOD'S TRUTH IS MARCHING ON!

A Christmas Story by Ineke Parlevliet

The cold December wind whipped down from the polar sea and howled around the barracks like a hungry wolf searching for prey. The sky was dark, but the eerie brilliance of the strong search lights illuminated the whole compound and criss-crossed with monotonous constancy over the low buildings and barbed-wired fences.

Nastasja shivered and wrapped her patched jacket tighter around her, anxious to protect what little warmth there was to her. The ice-caked thermometer on one of the barrack walls showed 32 degrees below zero. Nastasja knew from experience that before midnight the mercury would have dropped to far below forty. The snow crunched under her felt boots as she walked briskly back and forth in the open distance between her own barrack and the next one. You couldn't stand still for more than a few minutes with the fury of the wind head-on against you, for it wouldn't take long in this cruel climate to have your toes or fingers frost-bitten. She had wrapped a rag around her mouth and nose which made her breathing superficial and even more difficult. Her ears were securely covered by her woollen cap on which in large yellow letters her number was sewn: 137, as it was on the front and back of her jacket. For the guards and wardens a prisoner had no name, only a number. For them there existed no individuals; all were merely slave labourers who distinguished themselves only by a number and the length of time to serve.

Nastasja's rag was getting wet from her breath and froze up, turning into an icy crust over the lower part of her face. She crossed her arms, putting her hands under her armpits and pressed them close to her body. But her eyes remained alert and searched the huge snow-covered compound for approaching guards. How would she ever be able to explain her presence to them if they saw her? No sensible person would put one foot outside unless she really had to. She had no money to show that she planned to buy something in the camp store. Only a very few women in her barrack received a few rubles occasionally from their relatives "outside", which they were allowed to send in the letter every six months. Some were able to do some odd jobs for the wardens in return for a bit of money, but what the camp store had to offer was hardly worth buying.

Nastasja very seldom had anything extra. Hardly ever was there any time left to do extra jobs in the short time between supper and the night check. She much rather joined her group for a clandestine service. Tonight she had offered to be on guard. Something was brewing. The guards were tense, even nervous and especially during the last few days they had been on edge, punishing the smallest offense with harsh measures and taking even more precautions than usually. This morning, just before they were going to march off to the brick factories, they all had been searched thoroughly. The little warmth which they had treasured from the barracks, had been snatched away by the cold air when they had to open their jackets. What had the guards been after? What could a prisoner hide in her clothes or on her body? A piece of black bread, sacrificed from the breakfast ration to dull the hunger pangs of later hours? A scrap of metal which, after patient sharpening could be used as a knife, one of the many forbidden objects in the camp? It had been rough and when they finally started on their two mile trip to the factories, they had not only lost much of the body warmth, but also much precious time. Regardless of recounts or searches, their daily quota in the plant or mud pits had to be met.

Apparently nothing forbidden had been found. What had they expected? Nastasja thought cynically. Weapons? Extra clothing? Religious literature? As if anyone would carry a Bible in our pockets! There wasn't even one complete Bible in their whole barrack!

According to the camp rules it was not allowed to strip people in the cold. Camp rules! What a farce! The first one who would remind the guards of this special Article could freeze it out in the cooler, the small, icy-cold cell, without windows and light, which was one of the many treatments in the punishment-block. That's where the nuns were right now, most likely.

The nuns . . . Again Nastasja shivered. It had all started when the nuns had been brought in ten days ago. Nobody knew anything about them, except that they belonged to some religious Order and had come from a Moscow jail and now had to serve twenty years in the slave-labour camp of Vorkuta, this remote area under the frozen roof of the Arctic.

The three nuns had arrived with a new transport of convicted men and women. The men's camp was several miles away, close to the coal mines, where they had to perform their back-breaking work in the coal pits under the same cruel conditions as the women experienced in the brick factories.

Eight new prisoners had been assigned to barrack SM 85 and it had not been difficult to detect the nuns among them. They probably had been stripped of their religious garb on the day they had been arrested and they now wore the same ugly and shabby clothes as all the others, yet they looked completely different. Maybe it's their faces, Nastasja thought. For many years their faces had been sheltered and partly hidden by the headdress of their Order and neither wind nor sun would have had much chance to weatherbeat their pale, smooth cheeks and foreheads. How long they had been in jail, waiting to be sentenced, nobody knew, but even there they had not been exposed to the outside air. And so they had kept their soft, unblemished skin, but their prison time and the never-ending train journey from Moscow had carved deep lines in their foreheads like furrows in a farm field. Their cheeks were hollow and their eyes sunken in their sockets. The hair, cut short — obviously by an inexperienced hand — was dull and thin. Everyone of the 3000 inmates of the camp had experienced the same terrible and exhaustible train trip, fearing to arrive half frozen or to be chocked to death by the lack of air and space in the overcrowded carriages. Every prisoner in Barrack SM 85 knew too well what the nuns and the other five new prisoners had been through . . .

It's not only their complexion that makes them look so different from the others, Nastasja reflected, they themselves are different. Somehow, in spite of their severe hardship, they seemed vividly alive. Above all they were self-controlled, calm and dignified. Yes, dignified, that was the right word, Nastasja thought.

The other five women had fought like tigers for the four empty bunks with their hard-packed sawdust mattresses. They had screamed and cursed and their language had been obscene and filthy. It had betrayed their offenses without mentioning it. These women belonged to the category "criminals," the thiefs, the black marketeers, the prostitutes and it was completely in line with the principles of the camp commander to house the refined and worldly-protected nuns with this scum of womanhood.

The nuns had slept on the ground for the first part of the night, without complaining or making any fuss. They seemed to accept the camp life as it was. Later in the night Nastasja and Nadya and another woman of their group had offered the nuns their bunks, which they only, with great resistance, had accepted.

There had been no food for the new prisoners that night either. Since they had not been officially registrated before supper time, not one ounce of bread or one mug of gruel could be given to them. Again the other five had rebelled and one of them had managed to steal Dasha's crust of bread, which Dasha had hidden in her mattress. When Dasha found out about it, it had been too late. Her bread had been eaten and everybody knew that sooner or later Dasha would take revenge in a most hateful way.

The nuns had not mentioned their empty stomachs and had acted as if it was of no importance. Nastasja would have been willing to share her bread with them, if she only had had any left. But at night nobody had. Dasha had been an exception. The eight working hours in the plant plus the two mile walk forth and back to the compound demanded much more food than the women received. If one wanted to stay alive and to fulfil her quota, she needed every drop of the thin gruel and every crumb of the black bread to sustain her body and especially at night when their stomachs craved for food when they stumbled cold, dirty and dead tired into their barracks.

One night the nuns had knelt down on the hard, cold floor, as soon as the night check was over, and in a soft, melodious, almost chanting voice had started praying.

Nadya had walked up to them and had tapped on the shoulder of the oldest looking nun.

"Don't pray aloud . . ." she had whispered. "Any religious activity is forbidden here and the punishment is severe. Do it secretly, like we do . . ."

The nun had looked up and her eyes had reflected the serenity and peace of her soul when she said kindly: "We know. We've been through all that. But we are servants of God and Him we want to obey more than man."

Then she continued to pray, joining the others.

It had become quiet in the barracks. Women had committed suicide, had mutilated themselves for the sole purpose of being unable to work, others had become hysterical, insane. These things were rather normal in the pattern of a slave labour camp. But to see three women kneeling down for almost half an hour and praying in the most relaxed manner as if they were between the protective walls of their convent, was something which indeed was very unusual. Unusual and extremely dangerous. If one of the guards came in, or if one of the prisoners would betray them in order to be awarded some extra food, their punishment would be the worst the camp commander would be able to think up. As a reprisal measure, but also as a warning to all the others: For religion is a greater enemy of the Communist government than the most fanatic political anti-socialist.

That night nothing had happened. The next morning they had been praying again before the order to rise was given. The whole barrack had been on guard and tense. Any moment the guards could come in for the morning check . . . But again there had been no discovery, no trouble. Yet every inmate of Barrack SM 85 wondered in fear what would be the outcome of the open religious persistency of the nuns. It was unthinkable that this would go on without discovery or betrayal . . .

That same morning — just a few hours later — matters had come to a climax. Upon arriving at the brick plant, the nuns had walked up to one of the guards and had told him that they had accepted their sentence and would serve their twenty years in the labour camp, if this was God's will, but they didn't plan to put in one hour of work during their imprisonment.

"We are in God's service," the oldest nun had said, "and, therefore, we refuse to work for the devil."

Dasha had been standing close by and she would never forget the stunned face of the guard when he was so suddenly confronted with the impertinent announcement of the three nuns. Never before had he experienced such a calm and undisturbed boldness. Of course, there had been others in the past who had refused to work in the factories, but they had given different reasons: The work was too hard, the food too less, the hours too long, the cold too severe, their health too fragile. But no one had ever refused on the grounds that the camp work was of the devil and against her religion.

The guard had tried to reason with them, had pointed out what the terrible consequences would be of their refusal, but the nuns told him that they were fully aware of this, yet they could not and would not change their minds. Even more than their words, the tone in which this was said, indicated how firm and strong their decision was.

Suddenly the guard had lost his patience, infuriated as he was by the serene calmness of the nuns. He raged and cursed and threatened. Other guards were called to the scene and one dealt the oldest nun a hard blow in her face. She lost balance and fell on the ground, but when she tried to get to her feet, aided by the other two nuns, she was kicked by heavy boots.

The last the women saw of them, was that they were marched off, back to the camp. They hadn't seen them since. Terrible stories circulated the barracks of their being tortured and no one doubted them or believed that they were exaggerated. The guards themselves supplied them with all the horried details as to make all the other inmates realize that nothing could be gained by refusing to work.

The days had become a week and today it had been ten days ago that the nuns had been led away. Ten days in the cooler was about the limit anyone could bear. Then she either would be dead or else her health would have been so badly damaged that within a few months the end would come after much suffering and pain.

The nuns had been in the cooler for ten days now . . . and on top of that they had daily been tortured in the most cruel way. There was no hope for them. Yet they must be still alive, Nastasja reflected, for why else would the guards be so tense and extraordinary alerted?

Tonight Nadya had given the sign of the cross; her right index finger crossed over the top of her left one. Nastasja had been worried. Was it a wise thing to do, to hold a religious service now with every guard even more watchful than otherwise? She had discussed it with Nadya in a far corner of the drying room.

"It's so dangerous . . . What if the guards find out or Dasha betrays us? She's still mad about her stolen bread . . ."

"We have to do it, Nastasja. Not for our own sake, but for the nuns. They suffer for their faith. They have had the courage which we all should have had. We have to pray for them, we have to . . ."

Nastasja felt humbled. How right Nadya was! If ever the nuns needed their prayers it was now. And willingly Nastasja had offered to be on guard during the service; a job she hated as much as all the others.

The services were always held in the drying room. It was warm there and the lines with wet and drying clothes in the large room were a perfect camouflage for a small gathering. Every religious sect had their own gatherings: The Orthodox, the Roman Catholics, the Jehovah Witnesses, the Jews, or whatever sect was presented in a barrack.

Nastasja and Nadya belonged to the Baptist group. Their group of believers was small, not more than thirty, but they had their meetings at least twice a week. They needed them more than anything else. They wished they could have it every night, but it was too dangerous. Besides the drying room was so often used by other groups of believers, too. Without these religious gatherings, life in the camp would be unbearable for Nastasja. No matter how strong your faith was, you still needed the communion with the others, the corporate prayers and the community singing. Of course no one sang aloud, but they all hummed the tune of the hymn which one of the women recited softly. And then: Nadya had the greatest treasure of the whole barrack: Several chapters of the Gospel of St. John. No one else had a portion of the Holy Scriptures in her possession; none of the other groups either. Nadya had gotten hers from an inmate, who had died two years ago and who had always carried it on her body. Nadya didn't dare to do that. She had made an excellent hiding place for it in the crack in the wall behind her bunk. The few pages were thin and worn and used. They folded easily and didn't crackle. A large splinter of wood covered it neatly and only insiders who knew this secret place, were able to find it. By now their whole group knew these chapters of St. John by heart and yet Nadya took it along to every meeting. It was God's own Word and somehow the visible presence of it expressed this truth even stronger.

Often during the hard working hours or during the night when the so much needed sleep refused to come, passages from the first eight chapters of John sprang to Nastasja's mind and often gave her the strength and comfort to go on. When the bright lights of the watchtowers swooped over the compound the opening verses of St. John repeated themselves over and over again in her heart. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He Himself was in the beginning with God. Through Him everything came into being and without Him nothing that exists

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came into being. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overwhelm it."

The Light shines in the darkness . . . How well Nastasja understood this. When even searchlights were able to blot out the stars at night by their strength, how great God's Light must be! Sometimes the Light of God's love in her heart was strong and brilliant and chased all darkness out of her soul. At other times God's Light in her was no more than a small, flickering flame of a candle, struggling against the beam of despair.

Tonight the Light burned very low in Nastasja's heart. At first she — and many others — had been greatly encouraged by the faith of the nuns. But when the days dragged on and the camp life became harsher by the hours, she had started to wonder what good it did to protest the godlessness of their rulers and to exhibit one's faith without fear under the eyes of its enemies. The nuns were paying for it with their lives. And that would be the end. Who had gained? Really nobody. The camp commander had lost three slaves and every camp inmate would be terribly depressed and discouraged for weeks to come. Only the nuns themselves would receive their eternal reward . . .

The Light shines in the darkness. The Word had become flesh. A few more days and it would be Christmas, at least for the Protestant believers and the Roman Catholics, in the camp. For the Russian Orthodox Christians it would be on the sixth of January. They all could be sure that their day off next week would not be on the 25th. If there was one day which the camp commander hated, it was the day that Christians commemorated the birth of their Saviour. This year for sure the screws would be tightened and it would be sheer folly to have a religious meeting on either Christmas day or Eve. It was begging for trouble. Yet Nayda felt that somehow they should come together and celebrate the birth of Christ on Christmas Eve after the night check, however short and simple the service would be. Nastasja did not agree. What would it matter if they had a Christmas service a couple of days after? After the 25th the guards might be less suspicious. What importance was the date, anyhow? Was it not much wiser to be careful and avoid great risks than to stick to a date which in itself had no meaning? The last word hadn't been said about it and it was possible that Nadya would discuss the matter tonight with the other women in their group.

Sudden voices, carrying far in the clear sky, disrupted Nastasja's thoughts. Guards! Nastasja pressed herself against a barrack wall where the searchlights could not reveal her. Slowly she shuffled to the corner, still keeping herself pressed against the wall, and peeked. Six guards, carrying their rifles as if ready for battle, came marching straight to her barrack. For a moment fear gripped Nastasja's heart. She only had a few seconds to warn the others. As fast as she could she shuffled back and ran around the other corner where the entrance was. The guards were almost on her heels now. She went inside and had hardly closed the door behind her, when the guards opened it. Nastasja stooped down and picked up a shirt, purposely put at the door, and walked with it towards the drying room. Her heart pounded in her ears like drums. She would never make it in time through the deep length of the barrack. Her eyes caught sight of Olenka, whose bunk was close to the door of the drying room. Olenka was Lutheran. She could be trusted and she would understand.

"Olenka!" Nastasja shouted. "I think I saw your lost shirt in the drying room!"

Olenka looked up, astonished. Then she jumped up. "Thanks, Nastasja! I must have left it there myself!" She disappeared into the drying room. Nastasja sighed with relief and hastened to put off her jacket, which would betray her outside walk.

Ivan shouted an order. "Everybody stand in front of her bunk!"

The women, used to obeying blindly, dropped whatever they were doing and lined up in front of their bunks. Two guards had gone to the drying room, and commanded everybody out. Olenka had beat them by less than half a minute. But it had been enough. Trained in these matters, the group of believers had dispersed as soon as Olenka had come in and were now busy hanging out their clothes or chipping off the caked mud of their boots. Only Nadya was in a spot. She had hidden the pages of St. John under her clothes, but by the looks of things an intense search was planned and she certainly wouldn't have a chance to put this Gospel part into the hidden crack . . . She could try to throw it into the burning coal stove, but then it would be lost forever. Nadya would never do that.

"God, You have to take care of it," she prayed. "You know what Your Word means to us. Let me keep it, if this is Your will."

The search was thorough. Mattresses were turned upside down, furniture removed, clothes scrutinized, shelves inspected and walls and floors investigated for hidden escape routes or for the hiding of forbidden objects or literature. Criminal prisoners of another women's barrack, who were known for their collaboration with the guards, were brought in to search the women.

Nadya's muscles tightened when she saw Muza come her way. Muza was the meanest and most anti-religious prisoner of the whole camp. Compared with her Dasha was considered tolerable. Nadya knew that Muza would find her little Bible portion in no time, and would gladly report it.

With visible delight she started to search Nadya, whom she knew pretty well. They both had come to the camp with the same transport, now four years ago and Nadya who had endured Muza's continuous hatred against her religion with mounting irritation during that endless journey, had thanked God that she hadn't been put into the same barrack with Muza.

But Muza had not forgotten her. Using the filthiest language to provoke Nadya, she took her time to do her job well. She was only half way, when the guard called her number.

"428! The commander wants you right away!"

A large smile swept over Muza's face. "That's what I've been hoping for for days. My food parcel from home must have come! Bread, white, soft bread, Nadya, and sugar and sausages; perhaps even cake and cans with soup! I'm going to have a feast tonight! All by myself! Now you see what privileges one can get if one is a bit friendly with the commander!" She gave Nadya an ambigious smile. Then her face twisted with hate: "But you and your holy kind are stupid . . . so dreadfully stupid. You're all a-goners . . . just like those nuns. None of you will get out of here alive, but I will! Too bad you won't be around to see it!" Then she was gone. In her excitement she had forgotten to call someone else to finish off her job.

Nadya fixed her clothes and was marched outside like the other women who had been ready. Inside the search went on. For more than an hour the women waited outside, stamping their feet and swinging their arms to prevent themselves from freezing. Finally they were allowed to go back in. One woman was taken to the cooler for having written "Christ" on her bunk underneath her mattress. Two others were put on half rations for three days. Both had possessed an extra piece of garment, which was against the rules.

All women were cold to their bones and now crowded around the two coal stoves to catch a bit of their warmth. Half an hour later they were ordered outside again for the usual night check. Many had hoped that this would be skipped tonight, since they all had been counted and recounted during and after the search. It was far past ten, an hour later than usual, when the women were finally allowed to go to sleep: cold, overly tired and with a gnawing hunger. At five o'clock they would have to get up again . . .

In the semi-darkness of the night Nadya smoothed the pages of the Gospel and straightened the folds with great care and reverence. "Thank you God for letting us keep it;" her heart sang. Then she put it away in her hiding place.

A few days later the 200 inmates of barrack SM 85 were lined up in rows of five on the compound and waited to be marched off to the brickplants. The roll-call had just taken place and for security's sake the guards had counted them three times.

The guards were extremely nervous and some of their tenseness seemed to rub off on the watch dogs which always escorted the prisoners. They growled continuously and showed their large, sharp-pointed teeth as soon as a prisoner moved. The tense atmosphere had increased over the days and Nastasja felt it coming to a climax, although she had no idea what was brewing. Yet she was convinced as all the others than it had to do with the nuns.

It was extremely cold and still dark, but the search lights made up for this and gave the pale, hollow faces of the prisoners a spooky appearance. What a tragic bunch of human beings, the way they were standing there with their rags taped around their mouths and their patched-up clothes kept together by pieces of string.

Nobody spoke, but everybody's mind was filled with their own thoughts, all circling around the nervousness of the guards. What was going on? Something was going to happen . . . today. Today of all days: Christmas.

Not one of the religious groups in their barracks had dared to hold a Christmas Eve service last night. Even Nadya had had to admit that it was too dangerous. Guards had been watching till far after midnight. All Christian believers, regardless of their denomination were deeply distressed about it. For weeks they had been longing for this Christmas service, which they all needed so desperately to receive new strength and new hope. It was so difficult to celebrate Christ's birth alone on a hard bunk and with a stomach craving for food, while the soul was even emptier . . . it was so difficut to feel the joy of Christmas when you knew that fellow prisoners were suffering almost beyond endurance . . . it was so difficult to hear the message of God's Love while guards cursed and yelled . . .

Beyond the fenced-in compound lay the cruel land without end, a white land, hazy with blowing, eye-blinding snow, which knew no mercy, no compassion. The only thin tread with the real world — thousands of miles away — was the one track railroad, often blocked by snow. This was their only life-line. If the thread would be broken for a certain length of time, even the meagre rations of bread and gruel would stop to exist. North Siberia produced coal and bricks for industry, but no food for human beings.

"Hands behind your backs!" shouted the guards. It was the sign that they were ready to leave. The prisoners heard the familiar sermon, given each new morning as if the camp rules ever could change! Keeping straight in one line: One step to the right or left would be considered an attempt to escape and the dogs would be let loose, while fire would be ordered without warning.

The escort guards took their places, twenty paces away at either side of the column and ten paces between them. Yet the order of "First rank — forward march!" was not given. What were they waiting for?

Suddenly a hush fell over the prisoners and in spite of all the orders every head turned to the left. The three nuns, heavily guarded, passed the long file towards the beginning of the row. They looked pityful. Their cheecks were caved in, their faces were covered with mean scars and they limped more than they walked. They were almost too weak to stand, let alone to march two miles against a bone-chilling wind.

Nastasja looked at the nuns and her heart ached with pity. Then, for only a fraction of a moment, one of the nuns looked at her and again Nastasja was struck by the serene expression of the eyes. Their spirit was still unbroken! What would happen next to them? Nastasja wondered in fear. It was no less than a miracle that the nuns were still alive, but it was clear that neither the nuns nor the guards were going to give up their decision.

"First rank — forward march!"

Slowly the file started to move; then soon the normal march tempo was set in and for half an hour the prisoners would be exposed to the biting wind and severe cold. This trip was no fun for the guards either, but at least they were wearing long sheepskin coats and heavy, warmly lined boots. The cold was always the worst at dawn, when the body had not adjusted yet to the outside temperature. It was about fifty below, one of the coldest days they had had this winter so far.

A red sunrise announced a new day, which was already several hours old for the prisoners. How many more days? The song came back to Nastasja's mind which she had picked up from an American prisoner.

"How many miles must a man walk down, before he can lie down
to die?
How many tears must a woman weep, before she has none left
to cry . . . ?
The answer my friend, is blowing in the wind . . ."

Nobody knew. The answer was blowing in the wind. God knew. Of course. But God seemed so far away. God had sent His Son, but did He really know their needs, their suffering as He claimed? If we only could have a service tonight, Nastasja thought, and I could talk with Nadya. She would be able to help me. Her faith is so strong. Nastasja knew very well that it had been her in the first place who had advised against having one. But now that she had to face the day without having one this Christmas, she felt lost and lonely.

A deep longing for her husband and children surged up from the bottom of her heart. It was almost two years ago now that she and her husband had been jailed because of the religious upbringing of their three children. Two more years they had to serve . . . And when they would be released from their camps, would they receive their children back? Or would the State Boarding School keep them until they had reached their majority? Little Sasja was only eight years old . . . And what would have become of them? Little communists? Or would God preserve the seed of faith what they had planted in their children?

"Don't think about it now," she told herself. "Don't give in to these gloomy thoughts. Work it off in the plant. Pray. Think about the nuns; pray for them. God is near. Keep believing this . . . you have to . . . or else you're lost . . ."

Nastasja struggled on, blinded by snow and tears, which froze on her cheeks. With her hands on her back, she could not wipe them off. I've got to stop crying, she ordered herself. Stop crying! . . . How many tears must a woman weep, before she has none left to cry? . . . the song kept asking her. The words echoed in the crunching snow under her feet, in the howling of the wind, in the growling of the dogs, in the marching legs in front of her . . . How many tears must a woman weep . . . Christmas. Today it was Christmas. "No," Nastasja whispered, "it can't be . . . not today . . . somehow it's all mixed up, somehow it's all wrong . . ."

Dasha's face was dark and brooding. Her mouth was a thin, hard line and matched the bitterness of her eyes. Nine years ago she had been a young, beautiful woman in her mid-twenties, but now she looked old and wiry. Her beauty was gone, her capturing smiles had died, but her passion for life was still there. Someday she would be free again. Free . . . For this day she was waiting and fighting. For this day she was ready to cheat, even to betray others if this would bring her an extra bite to eat. Food was the main weapon in her struggle to outlive her fifteen years sentence. Food and staying out of trouble. Every punishment, regardless in what form, whether it was smaller foot rations, the cooler, longer working hours or torture was a dangerous attack on her health, which she had to avoid by all means. She was no communist, and never had been a criminal; after nine years of slave labour she had become even more anti-communistic than before, yet a criminal she had become . . . She had had to, out of self preservation.

Dasha knew that she was despised and hated by many women in her barrack. She could not care less. If she could earn some extra bread by being a tattertale to the guards, she would be more than stupid to keep her mouth shut. Everyone for herself, right?

Freedom had always been Dasha's goal of life. It was this urge for freedom which had made her rebel against the communist rulers. The state's straightjacket had choked her and she had cried out loudly against it with all the passion of her young, strong heart. Illegal presses had multiplied her cry for absolute freedom and self-rule, until she had been arrested and sentenced. Now she was less free than she ever had been. It was bad enough that the camp with its rules and guards and work quotas regulated and oppressed her life from early morning till night, but it was almost harder to endure the continuous presence of her co-prisoners, especially of the believers among them. Instead of making life at least a bit bearable by being cooperative as far as the camp rules and regulations were concerned, those Christians did exactly the opposite! They were the ones who held secret services, who hid religious literature or wrote Bible words on walls or bunks. Even in the factory they sometimes managed to steal a few minutes for a short prayer together. In every way they jeopardized the safety of all others, for if one of them was caught, everybody else suffered for it, too. Just look at those nuns! Because of them life in the camp had never been so miserable and harsh as it was now. If those nuns wanted to be-

(Continued on page 12)

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"Een brief van de jongen?" vraagt hij.

Afke veegt de ogen af en knikt. Ze reikt de brief over.

Jelke zet de bril op en leest.

Chicago, 12 oktober 1914

Beste ouders, broers en zusters.

Ik zal toch maar weer eens schrijven. Het is er bij gebleven, want ik heb twee slechte jaren achter de rug. De boer, bij wie ik werkte, is ziek geworden, omdat er in die streek niets meer groeide. Het was er droog en veel wind. Nu ben ik in Chicago, dat is en grote stad. Daar ben ik op de Verenigde Slagerijen, en moet de koeien aandrijven. Wij rijden op paarden. Ik ben bij een Schmid in de kost. Het is een Duitser van afkomst. Hij geeft Engeland de schuld van de oorlog. Hebben jullie het daar nu ook slecht? Als jullie er maar buiten blijven. Ik ben een keer naar de Baptisten kerk geweest. Dat was wel mooi. Ik verdien hier meer dan bij de boer, maar toch geen hoog loon. Schrijf maar gauw eens terug.

Jullie Jilderd.

Mijn adres is nu: 17th straat no. 42.

Jelke vouwt de brief omslachtig dicht en legt hem op tafel. Afke zit het met betraande ogen aan te kijken. "Die stumper," zegt ze. "Daar zo alleen in die grote stad en op zo'n slagerij. Was hij maar weer thuis." Ze schreit nu opeens met luide snikken. Nu is Jilderd weer heel dicht hij haar. Jelke zet de bril af. Hij trekt zijn gezicht in ernstige plooien. "Het blijven zware dingen een kind zo te verliezen," zegt hij. "Maar als ik het goed bezie, is onze Jilderd er één van twaalf ambachten en dertien ongelukken. Bij Bloemsma op het schip was het zo erg, dat hij als een dief wegliep. Nu is hij ook al niet meer bij de boer, maar op een slagerij. Ik zie het donker in. Als hij terug komt, is hij voor het werk waardeloos. Zo zie ik het."

Afke doet er het zwijgen toe. Elke keer als er een brief van Jilderd komt zitten ze zwijgend bij elkaar. Zwijgend ook gaan ze naar bed. Over de steeg hangt een roze mist. De maan schijnt . . .

De oorlog in Europa begint ook Amerika te beroeren. De kranten beginnen er meer en langer over te schrijven. Jozef Schmid windt zich alle dagen op over het onrecht, dat Duitsland naar zijn mening wordt aangedaan. Zijn vrouw en dochter interesseert het niet erg en Jilderd ook niet.

Jilderd is nu twee jaar op de slagerijen. Hij is zelfs bevorderd tot opzichter over de koeiendrijvers en verdient nu tamelijk goed. Maar alle dagen rijdt hij nog achter de koeien aan. In de zomer als de hitte als vloeiend vuur van de terreinen omhoogslaat, en in de winter, als barre sneeuwstormen gieren om de gebouwen, altijd komen er koeien, varkens en schapen aan. De slagerijen draaien onafgebroken alle seizoenen door. De bevolking van dit machtige land moet eten, wil vlees eten. De "Union Stockyards" zorgen dat dit mogelijk is en Jilderd zorgt, dat de koeien in de goede richting worden gedreven.

Nog staan zijn ogen onrustig. Nog heeft hij een regelmatig knap gezicht. Vierentwintig jaar is hij nu. Af en toe gaat er een brief naar Vleerbos. Maar zijn leven raakt verweven met Chicago. Met de familie Schmid. Met Hildegard. Ja, met Hildegard. Terwijl hij tussen de andere arbeiders naar het huis van Schmid loopt, denkt Jilderd aan de dochter van zijn kostbaas. Wat wil ze? Hij kan het antwoord daar gauw op geven. Ze wil verkering met hem, met hem trouwen. Een nieuw huis, zoals er nu zoveel worden gebouwd. Ze wil naar de bioscoop, naar café's met muziek. En dan wil ze ook nog wel eens met hem naar de kerk. Maar Jilderd heeft op dit alles nog geen "ja" gezegd. Op de verkering niet, op trouwen niet, op de bioscoop niet, op de café's niet. Op de kerk wel. Hij is er zich helder van bewust, dat als Hildegard met hem naar de kerk zou willen gaan, zou willen leven zoals hij dat in Vleerbos, thuis heeft geleerd, hij misschien wel ja zou zeggen. Dan zou hij haar vragen; het is een lief en goed meisje. Dan zou hij de roep naar zijn geboortegrond het zwijgen opleggen en Amerikaan worden.

Als hij de kamer bij Schmid binnenkomt, ruikt hij de geur van gebraden worst. Vrouw Schmid kan lekker koken, ze kunnen allemaal best eten.

Schmid heeft zich al gewassen en zit aan tafel. Hildegard is bezig de tafel te dekken en de vrouw is in de keuken.

Hij wast zich in het kleine hokje achter de keuken. Geurend naar de lekkere zeep, die Hildegard altijd uitzoekt, komt hij de kamer weer binnen. De vrouw is nu ook al gaan zitten.

"Schik aan jongen," zegt Schmid. Ze vouwen even de handen en sluiten de ogen.

Als ze eten kijkt Hildegard af en toe naar Jilderd. Haar lichtblauwe ogen lonken hem toe op een vreemde manier. Jilderd kent dat, maar hij doet alsof hij het niet merkt. Hij heeft zich altijd nog op een afstand gehouden. Hij wilde zich immers niet binden. Hij wilde Friesland niet kwijt.

Na het eten zitten ze in de kamer. Schmid begint weer over de oorlog. "Ik ben bang, dat ze Amerika er ook nog in draaien," zegt hij. "Dat zou niet best wezen mensen. Stel je voor: Duitsers, die nu Amerikanen zijn, zouden dan tegen hun eigen landgenoten moeten vechten. Vreselijk."

Jilderd gaat er niet op in. Hij zit wat te soezen. Hij denkt aan huis. Vier jaar is hij hier nu al in dit land. Soms zijn zijn ouders ver and vaag, maar soms ook ziet hij het dorp, de steeg, hun huis.

Hij gaat vroeg naar bed. Het gedruis van de wereldstad Chicago zoemt van ver, als een onderbroken zang, in zijn oren.

Jilderd woelt in zijn bed. Als getrouwd man in Chicago te leven trekt hem niet zo erg aan. Dan is hij voor altijd aan deze drukke, roezige stad verbonden. En dan Hildegard. Toen hij met haar naar de Baptistenkerk was geweest, was hij onder de indruk. Daar heeft hij meegezongen: "Jezus, leven van mijn leven," en: "Kom, kom met al uw noden." Maar toen de kerk uitging en hij tegen Hildegard zei: "Ik voelde mij zo echt thuis daar," antwoordde ze: "Nou ik niet. Ik ben liever in de bios."

Jilderd kan niet in slaap komen. Hoe moet dit gaan? En hij wilde zich immers niet binden en altijd in dit land blijven . . .

(Wordt vervolgd)

VREDE OP AARDE

Ik heb geluisterd naar berichten,
Van Middle East en van Viet Nam.
Ik heb geluisterd, toen een stem zei:
Dat daar de vrede nog niet kwam.
Ik heb geluisterd naar de stemmen
Van alle groten van deez' aard.
Het pogen van United Nations
Was evenmin dit jaar veel waard.
Ik heb geluisterd naar de onrust
In stad en verder in het land.
Ik heb geluisterd naar rapporten:
Het gaat naar de verkeerde kant.
Ik heb geluisterd naar 'n stem diep in me,
Die zei: "Die vrede, is dat nu wel waar?
Want als je zo eens om je heen ziet,
Dan is toch alles even naar."
En toch . . . Ik heb geluisterd naar de klokken,
Ik heb geluisterd naar hun toon.
Het was, alsof ze zeggen willen
"Geboren is God's eigen Zoon."
Ik heb geluisterd naar de Eng'len
Van 's Heren grote legermacht.
Het was een boodschap uit de hemel,
Die door hen tot ons werd gebracht.
Ik heb geluisterd naar de Vrede
('t Was toch maar niet alleen een wens?)
Als er gezegd wordt dat op aarde
Het welbehagen 's in de mens.
Ik heb geluisterd naar de Herders
(Zij zijn naar Bethlehem gesneld)
Nadat ze 't Kindeke aanschouwden
Werd 't grote nieuws door hen vermeld.
Ik heb geluisterd naar 't Evangelie,
Naar Simeon, naar Anna, de bejaarde vrouw,
Ik heb geluisterd naar hun woorden
Van liefde en van 's Heren trouw.
— — — — — — — — — —
En daarom, God, ik weet van Jezus' komen.
Ik weet dat Hij nog altijd leeft.
Ik weet, dat Hij op deze aarde
Nog steeds de Rust en Vrede geeft.

John Van Ast.

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(Adv.)

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ON THE EVE OF SNOW WHITE

by

Joe Veltman

The sign read
red-delicious apples
still-life red

she was deceived
to eat
then less naive
feared the worm

and shared the spoil.
The cross-section
was like a cloven hoof
unclean

she slept

and was transplanted
in time
to see
a cross implanted

in a skull
pitted with worms,
but undeceived saw
where the hill

was cloven
clean
through
the root of tree

where hangs a sign
red, delicious apples
still life-red

she awakens

and is Christened
Snow White

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BAKER BOOK HOUSE

WHILE THEY LAST
(Continued from page VII)

"Yes," Uncle John said. "Stop ruining Christmas!"

"How am I ruining it?" she asked pleasantly.

"Not you. The store. With all its trimmings, and its cheapness just to get people to buy. With that Santa Claus obscuring the meaning of everything. The whole store!" he said. "The whole store!" People in the store were beginning to turn at us and stare. A large man in a lark suit began to walk toward us. Just in time my uncle shrugged his shoulders and turned to go outside again. I followed right behind him.

But he stopped in front of a display stand just before he reached the door.

"What's this!" he screeched. Almost everyone in the store must have heard him.

I looked where he was looking. Piled one on top of the other were plastic replicas of the nativity scene. Above them was a sign which read: "The real meaning of Christmas. Were $5.98. Now 3.95."

"You can't do this!" my uncle screamed at the whole store. "I tell you you can't do this!" The manager came quickly up to him.

"Can't do what?" he asked.

"Sell these. You can't sell these nativity scenes."

"But Christmas is the birthday of Our Lord," the manager said.

But my uncle just kept saying "You can't sell these" over and over, until the manager took him by the shoulders and steered him out on the street.

Uncle John mumbled all the way home. Once I asked him what was wrong with the nativity scene, but he just kept mumbling. He didn't talk to anyone when we got home.

Like I said, this happened to me. And since then Christmas has never been the same. And I don't think it is my fault. My uncle doesn't think it is his fault either. But I do.

So conceived literature is greatly important. It is full of all kinds of import — religious, philosophical, social, practical, and other. Meanwhile it remains literature, does not become something else.

—Henry Zylstra in *Testament of Vision*.

BLOOD SNOW

by Nick Ringma

Perpendicular footprints
left by empty shoes . . . .

That's Christmas
in the cross-bound-sequence
of events
which lead no-where
but to stylized greetings
and butchered evergreens
synthetic angel's hair
and ten watt
tree-top stars.

And we're hanging around
for
a flake of golden moon
to melt our ritual
to mix
blood and snow
but our scheduling . . .

three feasts
a party
and a service

Perpendicular footprints
left by bare feet . . .

That's christmas
chaos bound birth . . .

naked and cross bound
naked and blood-snow
naked and snow white

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For the Time Being . . .

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Contributing Editors:
E. William Oldenburg
Stanley M. Wiersma

Managing Editor:
Cor W. Barendrecht

Art Editor:
Chris Stoffel Overvoorde

Contributors:
William H. Evenhouse
James Kildenhoven
Heather D. Marsman
Glenn A. Meeter
Wendell H. Rooks, M.D.
Frederick W. Tamminga
Joe Veltman

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Address contributions to **For the Time Being . . .**, inquiries as to membership in the Workgroup Christian Writers, and correspondence, to the Workgroup Christian Writers, P.O. Box 1269, Grand Rapids, Mich. 49501.

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The Flight to Egypt

The divine state visit to Planet Earth, in the year zero A.D. A donkey carries an infant King across the wasteland. Tired from the cosmic journey, the infant meets with fear, hatred, a misunderstood sense of place and time, and general apprehension.

The place is an obscure cavern, tucked away from civilization. The time is yesterday and tomorrow; He had been expected but not just now.

Fear petrifies the village and grows into a monster, raging in the palace of a political boss who is capable of almost anything. The arms of fear reach into the village, clutching its fingers around the lives of infants. Yet, the mass killing misses its objective, and the outrage proves ineffective. Two fearful parents lead an infant into the dark night that leads to Egypt.

In Egpyt, the sun rises on the day of the winter festival. The Egyptians celebrate the sun-god which has reached the highest point. Here the epiphany of the divine visit takes place. Slow to catch on to the idea of a visit of an eternal God, temporal man takes threehundred years to change the winter festival into a celebration of the visit. Then, Egyptian Christians change the celebration of the sun-god into the feast of the nativity of the Saviour King.

A shadow falls over the wasteland of Planet Earth, 1970. Hatred, fear, loss of orientation, and disjointed time, flee before the shadow. The hour is late and the announcements have arrived. Fallout shelters are built as the shadow moves closer. The visit and the flight continue . . .

cb

(editorial)

What's in a Name?

Choosing to name a new literary supplement after the title of a great poem by W. H. Auden may well appear to be an act of unparallelled audacity. Perhaps it is. But the greatest audacity may be the assumption that a new literary quarterly, whatever its name, is in any way necessary. There is a small volume, POET'S HANDBOOK, which lists "923 Places to Send Poems." Why should we become #924?

Why indeed? For the Time? Does our time need another outlet for the out-pourings of poets, artists, dramatists, and fiction writers? Isn't all of this activity, after all, pretty frivolous when one considers the serious times in which we live? Shouldn't we, instead, issue a call for more serious, no-nonsense, non-fiction approaches to the problems which plague us?

On the contrary. One of the most serious problems which confronts Twentieth Century man (North American man most emphatically included) is the threat of the de-humanization resulting from the population explosion, the information explosion, and our burgeoning bureaucracies. The singular human and humanizing vision of the artist has never been more necessary.

For the Time, Being. Being for Our Time. The individual artist creates Being, captures and conveys Existence for our time. If the artist is also Christian, he creates with the consciousness that he is himself a created being — being created for his time, aware always of the question which T. S. Eliot asks:

Where is the life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

Being for the Time. Poets, artists, dramatists, and fiction writers are beings of their time and create being for their time. And the Christian artist, paradoxical as it may sound, has greater security and freedom in being and doing than any other artist, because the Christian artist is in direct contact with Being Incarnate, the Christ who came in the fullness of time, to be Being for the time, for our time, for all time.

If the scope is that large, why are our concerns often so narrow? Why do we fret about being considered properly evangelistic, moralistic, pious, and devotional when we write? Does the Christian carpenter build a church every time he picks up hammer and saw? Must the Christian poet compose a hymn of praise each time he picks up his pen?

The Christian artist has as his birthright great security and freedom; he need not shackle himself. Auden's lines about the poet are not only about versifiers; they sing the duty and the glory of the Christian artist:

With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

E.W.O.

Lord, shall we not bring these gifts to Your service?
Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers,
For life, for dignity, grace and order,
And intellectual pleasures of the senses?
The Lord who created must wish to create,
And employ our creation again in His service
Which already is His service in creation.

—T. S. Eliot, Choruses from "The Rock".

While they last

by William H. Evenhouse

In some ways Christmas belongs only to the young; and as soon as one becomes sufficiently sophisticated to be insulted by tinsel and Santa Claus, he is deprived of a portion of the romance which surrounded the season before his awakening. And adults are largely to blame; insulted by things which no longer belong to them, they communicate their dislike to the young. The young have no reasons to dislike the trappings of Christmas; the elders give them the reasons. It happened to me.

"It's a sin!" my uncle shouted. "It's all gone commercial! The store decorations are up before Thanksgiving, ads are in the newspapers, Christmas sales, Santa Claus in the department store . . ."

"I saw him," I said, rather excitedly. "He's fatter than last year, and his beard is —"

"Be quiet," my mother whispered, so I shut up and listened to my uncle keep on going. My uncle is named John and is eighty at least. He was over for dinner with our family, and we had finished eating and were just sitting around. Uncle John's blackish eyes sparkled like snow when he talked.

He was describing how he was all for starting a committee named "Committee to Preserve the Real Christmas" which he of course would head. The committee, he said, would go to the stores and ask them to stop being commercial. They would petition for the destruction of the Christmas decorations which made the streets "gaudy and cheap."

"I like the decorations," I said.

"You're young," they said. "Keep quiet." "They" were my parents, who more or less felt the way my uncle felt but were more reserved. I tried to keep quiet.

"It would never work," my father said. "They wouldn't listen to you."

"I bet they would! I just bet they would. I'd explain why they shouldn't have all that junk around, who they were insulting, and I bet they would listen."

"I think it's a little silly," my mother whispered. She always whispered. "People have tried before. It's just sin in the world. You can't fight sin."

"You can!" my uncle shouted.

"*You can't.*" my mother whispered.

"I bet!" Uncle John hopped out of his chair. "I'll just try! I'll go talk to the store owners myself."

"When?" my father asked.

"Right now!" He was already putting on his coat. And before any of us really knew what he meant to do, he was heading toward the door. When he passed me, he reached out and lifted me up. "Want to come along?" he asked. I got my coat and followed him out the door.

Main street with its stores is only a block away, and we got there in just a few minutes. Snow was falling lightly, melting when it hit the streets. An accordian player was working for dimes by a city store, dimes for the blind. Other sounds of music mixed into his carols as we passed other stores. On one corner a very small girl stood watching a Christmas tree with blinking lights in red and yellow and green. Her mother came by after a moment and snatched her away. I tried to get a closer look at the tree too, but my uncle kept me moving. All along the street children were glueing their noses to windows and mothers were making them come unstuck. It was a beautiful sight.

"Let's go in here," my uncle said. We went into a small department store. Uncle John asked for the manager. When he came, my uncle looked straight at him and said, "It's a sin!"

"Huh?" the manager said.

"A sin. All the music and the decorations, just to make people buy. Have you got a soul? Christmas is going to the dogs, and you have to stop it."

"You crazy?" the manager said. And then he squinted at my uncle. "Look, sir, I don't mean to offend you, but I can't stand here all day. I got things to do." The manager walked off muttering, "Good grief, business is business."

My uncle pulled at my sleeve. "Come on, we'll have to try somewhere else."

"What's wrong with this store?" I asked. "It looks beautiful to me." I pointed toward a reindeer pulling a sled of toys.

"Everything's wrong with it. But you're too young to know. Let's keep on going."

We did. We tried several stores. At Reeves What-Not-Shop the lady laughed at us and gave me a candy-cane. I smiled at her and she winked. At the gas-station, the attendant never listened at all, just kept on working underneath a car in his garage. For quite a while my uncle bent over and shouted in his ear, but finally he gave up. We tried two more stores before we ended up at Sturmy's five-and-dime. "Last try," my uncle said as we went in.

He started on the first clerk he saw. A young lady it was, who came over and said, "Can I help you?"

(Continued on page VIII)

Naiveté

by Heather D. Marsman

Nicky and I left the V.W. near the main road and walked up the gravel drive.

"Awful weather for a party," I said.

"Huh?"

"The weather. It's dull. This slush is depressing."

"Sure is," she agreed. Dark edgings were creeping up her satin pumps. She walked on tiptoe, panting a little and cautiously advancing the toe of each shoe before taking a full step.

We stopped at the door and Nicky knocked.

"Oh my hair," she moaned. "Does it look terrible?"

"No," I said.

"I should have worn a hat," she said, "but I can't stand them. I wish if it snowed it would snow. This is rain!" And with the tips of her fingers she fluffed her hair.

As no one answered, she raised her arm to knock again. Just then Judy opened the door. She was laughing an overly exuberant chuckling laugh. Suppressing it momentarily she ushered us in.

"Well hello there! We thought you weren't going to show up. What happened? Have trouble finding the place?"

"No," I said, "we started out late because Nicky's mother wanted the V.W. for some last minute gift buying."

I could hear bits of several conversations going on around the corner of the hallway, the usual stuff. Someone was complaining that Christmas was boring, writing cards to people you hardly knew and more every year, and decorating a tree that was fake or that dropped needles like crazy all over the carpet. Someone else said she didn't like it either except that the little ones got so excited about Santa Claus.

I bent down to unzip my boots as Judy hung up our coats.

"Come on in when you're ready," she said when she finished, "I have to get back to my hostessing."

"Sure," I said, "soon as I get this zipper working."

"Okay," she said and went around the corner into the room.

"How do you think she is?" asked Nicky.

"She seems tense," I said.

"You think those courses she's taking are keeping her busy enough?"

"You mean . . ."

"Yeh, so she doesn't think about it all too much."

"You don't think she should think about it?" I asked.

"It's not that. I mean she should not brood about it."

"No," I said, "That wouldn't do any good."

"Doesn't sound like she's brooding now," said Nicky, smiling.

We could hear Judy talking and laughing in the next room. "It was awful. No, really!" Everyone laughed. "Think of it," she said, "six years old and totally disillusioned." Everyone laughed again, and then someone else said, "Yeh, that's about it. My brother told me when I was seven and I was so mad at him I wrecked his stamp collection." At that several conversations started up, and my zipper gave way.

"Now where are my shoes?" I asked. "Oh, here they are," and I slipped them on. "Okay Nicky, all set."

We rounded the corner of the hallway and stopped short. A sudden stillness seemed to have preceded us and was introducing itself about the room like an unwelcome guest. At first I thought we had caused it, but no one looked at us and half the room was still talking. However, one by one, these conversations trailed off and died.

One girl recrossed her legs and someone else awkwardly folded her arms. Others just looked questioningly at one another.

I saw Judy glance over at a girl, I didn't know, a blond. The girl was apparently puzzled. She looked quizzically from one pair of averted eyes to another, a faint little smile on her face.

Judy looked perplexed, lost; her childlike party gayety deflated, her skimpy, frilly black dress now obviously black crepe. She looked across at the blond again, a little frown matching the other's smile. She smiled too, then frowned again, still silent, twiddling her sherry glass and glancing about the room.

Then, as the silence yawned, she rose abruptly, chirping, "More sherry anyone?"

Immediately, as if the pull-string had been released in the back of a talking doll, came, "Yes, please," "Oh, no thank you," "Well, just a little" accompanied by nervous giggles and a general shifting of weight from one hip to another.

No one commented on the incident. Everyone seemed more animated than before, saying how good the sherry was and what kind was it and talking about weddings and kids and clothes.

It was a strange sort of party to begin with, girls only, afternoon sherry in a winterized cottage. Judy had probably wanted to get her mind off the separation.

I looked over at the blond girl. I felt a hand on my arm. "She's a friend of Cathy's," Nicky whispered.

"Oh."

"Uh huh. You know what she said?"

"You mean just before we came in?" I asked.

"Uh huh. Right out of the blue she said, 'Christmas isn't Santa Claus, Christmas is Christ.' Kind of dumb thing to say at a party, eh?"

"Yeh," I said, "wonder where she comes from."

(Continued from page IV)

hard up for somebody to give your presents to, don't look no farther. Hand 'em over. I don't want to see them go to waste, and I'll take my chances on whatever they are.

(The three wisemen at first look a little startled, then they smile; THE FIRST WISEMAN begins to laugh.)

FIRST WISEMAN: Are you a virgin? And do you perchance have a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes somewhere in the back room?

WAITRESS: Watch your talk, mister, or I'll get the manager!

SECOND WISEMAN: You don't understand, Miss. We can't give you the kind of gifts we have.

WAITRESS: Why? Why not?

SECOND WISEMAN: Why not?

WAITRESS: Yeah, why not? Is there something wrong with me? Or is there something wrong with whatever it is you got to give away? Or don't you really want to give it away so badly after all? You were all fired up about it a minute ago. It can't be there's anything wrong with me, because if there was you guys wouldn't know it. You haven't done nothing but make wisecracks at me so far. *(She glares at THE FIRST WISEMAN)* It ain't that I'm greedy, you know, it's just that I thought I could calm you down if I offered to take whatever you were all so dead set on giving away and couldn't find no one to give to. *(She glares at each of them in turn)* Well, what's the deal? Your presents ain't so hot, or you're not so hot to get rid of them any more?

SECOND WISEMAN: *(looking at each of the other two)* What can we say?

(There is a pause.)

WAITRESS: What? The three wise men without nothing to say?

FIRST WISEMAN: Wait! She's right! *(takes a step toward the WAITRESS)* And there still is a route to Bethlehem, even though it's not an easy one. And there is a star, or guiding principle at any rate, but it's not so high and serene, because the high and serene came down to earth, became flesh. Listen: "Whoever gives a cup of cold water to drink in my name" or "inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these . . . you have done it unto me."

SECOND WISEMAN: So that's our guiding principle, the place to deliver our gifts?

FIRST WISEMAN: But it's not as simple as it sounds, especially if your gift is anything fancier than a cup of cold water. And especially when "the least of these" is not singular, not even simply plural, but legion. This girl represents thousands, legions, just like her. Will we give her, will we give them, our gifts?

SECOND WISEMAN: Will we?

THIRD WISEMAN: Can we?

PUBLIC ADDRESS: Lake Central Flight 572 to Denver is now boarding at Gate 3. United Air Liner Flight 231 to Minneapolis and St. Paul is now boarding at Gate 5.

SECOND WISEMAN: *(getting up and going to his coat)* That's my flight.

THIRD WISEMAN: I think father's out there waiting. *(he crosses left to get his coat, then crosses right and shakes hands with THE FIRST WISEMAN)* See you back East, Hal. *(turns left and shakes hands with THE SECOND WISEMAN)* Nice meeting you, West. *(he exits left)*

SECOND WISEMAN: *(crossing right and shaking hands with THE FIRST WISEMAN)* I hope we can talk again sometime, Ellison. *(he follows the THIRD WISEMAN out left)*

FIRST WISEMAN: *(crossing left and putting on his coat)* This trip is longer and harder than I had expected.

WAITRESS: Merry Christmas to all and to all a goodnight.

FIRST WISEMAN: Goodnight. *(he exits left)*

WAITRESS: *(coming down to the small table again with her tray and beginning to clear off the cups and saucers)* Well, there go the three wise men. Some talkers, ain't they? I wonder if they really do have them fancy presents they were talking about, and I wonder who'll get them. It'll be Christmas in an hour now, so they've probably made up their minds. I wish I could understand what that one said there at the last. I'm legion, he said. Maybe I should hang up my stocking tonight. *(going back to the counter)* Some of those words were sure pretty — just like right out of books. And they weren't such bad guys, once they got over being smart-alecky. They were almost like regular human beings. *(yawns)* Another hour to work and then it's Christmas. It must've stopped snowing.

Curtain

O MAN!

by

Wendell H. Rooks, M.D.

O man who seeks to enter space
   And other worlds would claim,
Hast thou yet learned the God of heaven,
   His star that ne'er doth wane?
You know the radiance of earth's sun,
   The speed of light unseen —
Hast thou yet felt God's warming love,
   Know Christ the light supreme?
The blood in banks — can it atone?
   No saving cross or crown —
O man that seeks a life beyond
   And centuries of time,
Hast thou yet found eternal joy,
   A moment's peace divince?

O man that fathoms ocean's depths
   And scales the highest peak,
Yet scoffs at words or deepest faith
   And shuns what angels seek;
That hopes for calm from bottled vice,
   To tame soul's gasping moan,
Encapsuled food and lettered strength,
   While leaving God alone;
O man so drunk with surging power,
   With speed and glamour vain,
Turn now thy heart, turn now thy soul,
   And feel his drawing rein.

O thou whose ills of soul and mind
   With drugs would yet assuage;
Take now the drink of healing springs
   And balm that knows no age.
O man who once held earth for Him,
   Yet lost it through thy sin;
Return and humbly seek thy God.
   He gave, thy soul to win.

The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight . . . .

Three Wiseguys from the East

a one act play

by E. William Oldenburg

Cast of Characters

THE FIRST WISEMAN, Harold Ellison, an economist from Harvard.

THE SECOND WISEMAN, Alexander West, an sociologist from Columbia.

THE THIRD WISEMAN, Ronald Sanderson, a physicist from M I T.

(All three WISEMEN are in their early or mid-thirties. With the exception of Sanderson, who may appear somewhat rampled, they are smartly dress.)

THE WAITRESS. In her late twenties, she retains traces of a former attractiveness, but she has become decidedly frowsy and dumpy.

Scene: *The coffee-shop of the airport at Sand Forks, Iowa. Downstage, center, is a small table and three chairs. Upstage, center, there is a counter with a stool behind it; on the counter, right, stands a small artificial Christmas tree of the metallic, glittering variety, and a cardboard and plastic nativity scene; on the counter, left is a pot of coffee. Upstage, left, is a halltree. Upstage right, some airline posters advertise flights to exotic lands. As the play begins, THE WAITRESS is clearing some cups and saucers off from the small table and putting them an a tray. She is chewing gum, methodically and bored. An instumental, Lawrence Welkian, version of the carol, "We Three Kings," is being piped in over the P A system. THE WAITRESS picks up her tray and swipes at the table half-heartedly with a rag. As she turns to go to the counter, she begins to accompany the music in an off-key soprano.*

WAITRESS: Field and fountain moor and mountain — whatever a moor is *(Music fades out)* And joy to the world O ye faithful. And me working on Christmas Eve. Without time-and-a-half either. *(Standing behind the counter now, she leans forward and addresses the audience)* No Virginia, there ain't no Santa Claus.

PUBLIC ADDRESS: Your attention please. United Air Lines Flight 370 to Omaha and Kansas City is now scheduled to depart at 9:45 if the weather permits.

(THE FIRST WISEMAN enters from the left, looking about him in wry amusement. He crosses to right of counter, taking off his hat and putting his briefcase on the floor.)

WAITRESS: *(in the established automatic and expressionless manner; declarative, not interrogative)* May I help you.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(taking off his coat and crossing left to halltree)* You may, kindly maiden, gentle inn-keeper, and greeter of the weary wayfarer in Mid-America's more barren reaches.

WAITRESS: *(addressing the audience while the first wiseman is hanging up his coat)* O ber-other, a wise guy. That's all I need to make the night complete.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(rubbing his hands and crossing to right end of counter again)* This Yuletide eve demands some cheer to warm, make glad, the heart of man. Where's the flowing wassail bowl? Some bubbling solace to soothe the ache of modernity, both fleshly and psychic. How about a hot toddy?

WAITRESS: You're outa luck, mister. This is Sand Forks, Iowa, and this is just a coffee shop. This ain't no cocktail lounge.

FIRST WISEMAN: *Isn't*, you mean. And is there, then, no more convivial place?

WAITRESS: *(with great satisfaction)* No, there *isn't* none. Right here's as cheery as you'll get at this airport, mister.

FIRST WISEMAN: Coffee, then. Black.

(The WAITRESS places a cup and saucer in front of THE FIRST WISEMAN and pours. Enter from left, as she does so, THE SECOND WISEMAN, carrying a briefcase, his coat collar turned up. He crosses immediately to left corner of counter.)

SECOND WISEMAN: Say, pour me a cup of that too, Sis.

WAITRESS: *(to audience, as SECOND WISEMAN is hanging up his coat)* Sis! The place is crawling with creeps tonight.

SECOND WISEMAN: *(turning toward first)* Excuse my forwardness, but your face is somehow familiar. Perhaps I've seen your picture.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(affably)* Perhaps. *Time* magazine has labelled me The Boy Wonder Economist. I'm Harold Ellison, Economist, Harvard, and *sometime* — as *Time* would have it — advisor to the administration in Washington.

SECOND WISEMAN: *(extending his hand)* Alexander West, sociologist, Columbia. Onetime author of *The Urban Utopia.*

FIRST WISEMAN: *(obviously impressed)* I've read it. A very sound work. Thoroughly researched, and your treatment of the economic factors in your chapter on "The New Industrialism" was most competent. I — Ronald!

(THE FIRST WISEMAN addresses THE THIRD WISEMAN who has just entered from left.)

THIRD WISEMAN: *(stopping, stage left, surprised)* Hal! What brings you . . . ? Why didn't you . . . ? We might've travelled together from Cambridge.

FIRST WISEMAN: I didn't plan to come here. You see before you the victim of man-made airline schedules and heaven-sent blizzards. I was on my way to St. Paul to join Betty and the kids at my in-laws; they've been there for three days. But the blizzard forced us down at O'Hare. That was noon. Finally they advised I take the flight to Sand Forks and try to get a later flight north. Now it seems I'm stranded here. Oh, excuse me —

(He has just noticed that THE SECOND WISEMAN is looking puzzled, expecting an explanation or introduction)

Ronald, this is Professor West from Columbia — wrote that book on urbanization, you know. West, this is Ronald Sanderson, physicist, M.I.T.

THIRD WISEMAN: *(extending his hand)* I'm honored.

SECOND WISEMAN: *I'm* honored!

FIRST WISEMAN: Madeline, bring another cup of coffee, please. I'm afraid coffee's the best we can do, Ronald. O, but I'd forgotten. This is your native soil, isn't it?

THIRD WISEMAN: *(hanging up his coat)* Yes. My parents still live on the farm — about eight miles west of here. I'm waiting for Father to come out in the Ford. *(coming to the table)* He'd never forgive me if I took a taxi. *(sitting with the other wisemen)* With this weather he might get out the horse and sleigh tonight.

SECOND WISEMAN: Horse and sleigh? Fascinating.

WAITRESS: *(bringing coffee to THE THIRD WISEMAN)* Cream or sugar?

THIRD WISEMAN: Neither. I'm essentially an ascetic, you see. *(Shyly)* Besides, dear girl, your own sweetness will suffice, I'm sure.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(nudging THE SECOND WISEMAN)* Ronald's always been a lady-killer. And he's resisted the lure of marriage: the most eligible bachelor in all the academic jungles of the east coast.

WAITRESS: *(returning with coffee pot)* Ber-other!

FIRST WISEMAN: By the way, West, what brings you to the wind-swept midlands?

SECOND WISEMAN: My plight is something like yours. My destination's Denver. My family is there already, while I, detained at first by exams and committee meetings, am detained now by this blizzard. And here I am.

FIRST WISEMAN: Well gentlemen, here *we* are on Christmas Eve: three wisemen from the East.

WAITRESS: *(behind the counter)* Three wise *guys* from the East!

SECOND WISEMAN: *(musingly)* Christmas Eve. America's great sentimental bath. When once a year we wash off the grime, the thick-caked materialistic crust that coats our humanity. And even then, like a recalcitrant kid who knows the bath is unavoidable and so had one last good mud-wallow to make it worthwhile, America anticipates its bath and wallows in that greatest display of greed and pure profit motive the world has ever known — the Christmas shopping season.

WAITRESS: I ain't supposed to be unrespectful to the customers, but these guys give me a pain.

(She sits down on the stool behind the counter and begins to file her finger nails, glancing up accasionally at her customers.)

FIRST WISEMAN: *(to SECOND WISEMAN)* Is that your gift?

SECOND WISEMAN: Gift?

FIRST WISEMAN: Yes, gift. Or *aren't* we the three wisemen? Was that little speech your gift, your contribution of wisdom?

SECOND WISEMAN: And what's your gift?

FIRST WISEMAN: Gold, of course. "Gold I bring . . ." Isn't that traditional? Gold — the stuff economics are built on — or were — it makes a good metaphor at any rate. So run your sentimental bath water, West, but don't run the profit motive down the drain.

SECOND WISEMAN: Hmm, not bad. But I should think, if you really want to extend the metaphor, you'd say: don't throw out the baby with the bath.

THIRD WISEMAN: By George, Harold, that's to the point. The babe in the manger, you know. What's the good of talking about gifts if we forget him?

PUBLIC ADDRESS: T W A flight 240 to Harrisburg and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania has been temporarily grounded.

FIRST WISEMAN: Temporarily grounded! Perhaps the flight to Bethlehem has been grounded longer than we realize. So where do we deliver our gifts?

SECOND WISEMAN: And don't forget. Our Bethlehem's no pastoral manger scene. A cradle of hot steel's more like it.

". . . the chanting buildings rise,
Rivet and girder, motor and dynamo,
Pillar of smoke by day and fire by night,
The steel faced cities reaching at the skies,
The whole enormous and rotating cage
Hung with hard jewels of electric light,
Smoky with sorrow, black with splendor, dyed
Whiter than damask for a crystal bride
With metal suns, the engine-handed age,
The genie we have raised to rule the earth
Obsequious to our will
But servant-master still . . . ."

WAITRESS: *(half-impressed)* Wow.

SECOND WISEMAN: That's Stephen Vincent Benet's description of industrial America —

FIRST WISEMAN: *(disappointed)* And I thought our age had produced its first extemporaneous sociologist-poet.

SECOND WISEMAN: I used that passage as the prologue to my book.

FIRST WISEMAN: Forgive us for forgetting.

SECOND WISEMAN: I thought the contrast between the two Bethlehems might be worth pointing out.

FIRST WISEMAN: It *might be.*

THIRD WISEMAN: I wonder if the first three wisemen got on as well as we do? We don't seem to be getting anywhere.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(getting up suddenly and going to his coat, rummaging in the pockets)* In our cosmic sentimental journey to Bethlehem, you mean? Or in our more immediate continental destinations? *(returning to the table with a pipe and tobacco pouch)* Muriel, fill our cups, please. You brew a most delicious coffee.

(The WAITRESS gets up reluctantly and fills the coffee cups.)

SECOND WISEMAN: So now you talk of sentimental journeys, but you didn't like my metaphor of the sentimental bath. Your gift is gold, you said. Maybe Sanderson and I should talk of our gifts, even if none of us can decide where to take them.

THIRD WISEMAN: Yes, to pass the time. I would imagine those first three fellows did something of the sort. "Did you bring frankincense? I thought myrrh would be nice. Isn't that gold awfully heavy in your saddlebags?"

SECOND WISEMAN: My gift is the gift of order. Not imposing order on society, but showing man what the structure of his society is, so that order becomes possible. So that man may live in communities, not in packs or herds.

THIRD WISEMAN: My gift is the gift of power. Power pure and simple. Not better things for better living through chemistry. Not atoms for peace. Nor that wonderful anomaly — a nuclear deterrent to keep the peace. Just power, pure and simple. It may be used by the benevolent or the diabolical.

SECOND WISEMAN: So may the knowledge of order, which is my gift. It has been used to enslave and to liberate.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(filling his pipe)* And so, obviously, may my gift. A sound economy and full employment is no guarantee against graft and exploitation. So then, our three gifts, gold —

SECOND WISEMAN: Order.

THIRD WISEMAN: Power.

FIRST WISEMA: Gold, order, power — our three gifts are *really* gifts only if we can find out where to deliver them.

THIRD WISEMAN: Yes, chances are, if I left *my* gift under the tree with a tag which read "From Ronald Sanderson to whom it may be useful — Merry Christmas," there'd be by New Year's Eve another super-weapon, another hundred megaton monstrosity to usher in the New Year with a bang.

SECOND WISEMAN: And if I left *my* gift with a tag like that, it could be picked up by any totalitarian organizer with an urge to impose order for his own ends.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(lighting his pipe)* I scarcely need to add that the "love of money is the root of all evil." It seems a little odd, doesn't it, that my predecessor, that first wise man, should have brought gold. Unless —

SECOND WISEMAN: Unless he loved the recipient and not the gift itself. Unless he weighted down his saddlebags with the stuff and galled his camel's sides only because he wanted to get rid of the stuff, to give it away. Maybe love's the important thing after all and the gift doesn't mean much without it.

FIRST WISEEMAN: So back to the sentimental journey after all?

THIRD WISEMAN: If a scientist may speak of these things, I don't think love is really very sentimental. It's not easy. There's too much self-sacrifice, self-denial.

SECOND WISEMAN: That's why we substitute sentimentalism.

FIRST WISEMAN: But love in economics?

SECOND WISEMAN: No, economics with love.

THIRD WISEMAN: And physics with love.

SECOND WISEMAN: Order with love.

FIRST WISEMAN: *(banging his pipe down in the ash tray and getting up; during the ensuing speech he paces back right, returning to the back of his chair at the end of the speech but not sitting down again)* All right, *with* love. But *to* whom? Will it help much, Ronald, if you change the tag to read "With love to whom it may be useful, Merry Christmas"? What about it, West? Are we on the way to your Bethlehem of smoke and steel: pillar of smoke by day and fire by night? It's easy enough to talk about those first three; they could goad their camels on; they had a destination — the actual manger, the incarnation of a loving God in a stable. And that guiding star, high, serene, and certain: "westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to the perfect light." What do we have? A gaudy, star-spangled sky "hung with hard jewels of electric light," myriads of neon signs pointing in myriads of directions. Which one is our guiding light? *We* three kings disoriented are!

SECOND WISEMAN: To whom? So that's still the question. How can we find our real Bethlehem?

THIRD WISEMAN: And the real manger with the real Christchild, not the plastic and cardboard imitations. Where is it safe to leave our gifts? To whom can we give them?

WAITRESS: *(rousing herself from her lethargy at this speech and getting up from her stool)* Well, I've heard about enough, though I can't say I've understood much. But if you guys are really so

(Continued on page VI)

AFTER ANNUNCIATION

by

Frederick W. Tamminga

The wind came feathering from the hills this
fall
into my blood and breathing. And at night
the flutter
of wings in me will sometimes swell
into alarming fleshness of another.

At times I fear that in my ignorance,
my earthbound fluttering, my flesh will give
my wings to him, my flimsy girlish wings —
will his feathers be well-knit when he must
leave?

I lie awake and in my heart I ponder
the nestled One within — will heaven thunder
the day of his flight . . . or will the weather
be mild?

I lift an unsettled heart to the darkening hills
(the silhouette trees are entrusted to the will
of a feathery wind . . .)
I will sleep and trust in the child.

ADVENT IMAGES

by

Frederick W. Tamminga

In this night, when blood is pulsing
and the mother's throat grows dry,
earth beats crescendo on the drumhead skies

Moments dilate into the moment
of pressing through the funneled time —
soon the crying will clear the slime.

When the fruitful ark of wonder
settles down at last, the door
opens on our dungeoned floor.

Skies relax now — there is singing
as a gush of heaven's purple blood
flushed us from the rutted mud,
flowing us to our Father.

Top to bottom: 1. Zacharias in The Tempel. 2. The announcement to Mary. 3. Mary's visit to Elizabeth. 4. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 5. . . . There was no room for them in the Inn. 6. The night of birth.

KIRISMATI A NYANKWALA*)

Nyankwala is an ancient village now on its third site. It used to be a sizeable community with its own walls for protection against the enemy when the peace of Britain had not yet been extended to the north of Nigeria. Then, in search of better farm land, the elders decided to pull up their roots and move up the Donga River and across. Being unable to come to a unanimous agreement as to exact site, the people split into two groups, one of which settled some ten miles from the original village and retained the name Nyankwala, while the other group moved further up river to establish what is now known as Suntai.

A group of Christians dancing at Wukari, Christmas 1969.

Whether this second Nyankwala ever had its own walls, I cannot tell, since I have never set foot in the area, though I have passed it several times by canoe. The old mango trees still testify to the presence of a sizeable population, but that is the only remaining witness. During the disturbances caused by successive Munci riots in the sixties, Nyankwala village was burned to the ground and the population fled across the river and settled on its present sight, only a mile or so from a nearly all-season road.

It was in this village that my wife and I celebrated our first Nigerian Christmas back in 1966. We had intended to go there by a Chevvy Carry-all, but the road was too rough and the Carry-all too beat up and so we had to admit defeat after only eight miles. Then we decided to resort to public transport — a mammy wagon. This meant we would have to stay for at least five days, since transport to Nyankwala in those days was available only on market days.

The lorry stopped at the end of the road at Gindin Dorowa, a sizeable town about a mile from Nyankwala that derived its name from the fact that the original compounds were built in the shade of some huge locust-bean trees. From here we had to trek the remaining mile. We had our regular trek equipment, of course: a trekbed each, blankets, mosquito nets, a supply of boiled drinking water, a bushlamp, a flashlight and the rest of a trekker's paraphernalia. However, we did not have all this ourselves, since there were plenty of eager youngsters ready to carry our loads on their heads.

Upon arrival we were met by Iliya, the leading evangelist of the Nyankwala congregation, who showed us our quarters, a two-room mud-brick building with a corrugated roof. At the back, a small area had been enclosed by a six-feet high grassmat in order to give us bathing privacy. Buckets of water were carried from the river so that we could scrub all the dust we had collected from our journey. Food was brought: rice and chicken deep-fried in palm oil, generously endowed with red pepper, a dish that to this day remains my favorite African chop.

It was Christmas eve. At about quarter after eight, the church bell, a mere piece of iron dangling by a foot of wire from a tree, began calling the Christians to the grass church. After about a dozen worshippers had arrived, the song leader, Reuben Abubukar, called out a number from the Littafin Wakoki, a collection of European hymns translated into Hausa, and haltingly the congregation slurred with Reuben through the Hausa version of Silent Night. They were hardly familiar with it and it was quite obviously a meaningless exercise for most of the men, while the women, with one exception, did not participate at all because of their illiteracy. Slowly the church began to fill up as the singing dragged on. There was little of the enthusiasm these songs evoke in our home churches and it was not until they switched to their own songs in the native Jukun tongue that the singing became more animated, but these songs had nothing to do with Christmas.

Iliya Danjuma entered together with his elders and the service began — after the pressure lamp was given an extra boost. A few more unfamiliar and uninspiring songs, a short sermon and a few prayers offered by various members of the congregation and the service was concluded.

The people were only too eager to be dismissed in order to get on with the next point on the traditional program: drumming, dancing and singing, their most favorite form of entertainment, but all of it quite unrelated to Christmas. The Gospel has not sufficiently been embodied in their culture to have special Christmas dances and songs. But the neighbours knew what it was all about. Slowly the dancing procession moved forward till they arrived at the chief's compound and there they danced till the roosters welcomed the early morning.

It was natural enough for them to have their dances in front of the chief's compound, but this year there was a sort of a challenge attached. The chief, a Muslim, had asked the Christians to join the Muslims in their celebration at the end of their month of fasting, but the Christians had refused. He consequently threatened to prevent the Christians from performing their Christmas dances, but nothing came of his threat, though the elders were worried enough.

My wife and I watched the proceedings and even joined them briefly, but African rhythm constantly eludes the European. Nevertheless, our clumsy attempts were appreciated. A song is repeated twenty times and then another and yet another and . . . till the rooster crows. Needless to say, we did not last this long.

Christmas morning. We rose early, determined not to miss anything of significance of our first Nigerian Christmas, but we did not really have to worry, for the late night dance was taking its toll. The morning service was set at the traditional nine o'clock, but by the time the bell was rung, it did not appear that anyone had heard it. By 9:20, however, the first few faithful straggled into the church, soon followed by others, but no one looked particularly refreshed or inspired, let alone joyful! Few were prepared to enter the spirit of Christmas. Iliya did his best to arouse some enthusiasm, but sleepers simply are not enthusiastic; they need first to be awakened and that was no mean task. However, when he closed the Littafin Wakoki and led them in a few rousing Jukun songs, the atmosphere did improve. In his sermon he dwelt on the virgin birth and his unproblematic approach was delightful — there was no trace of the kind of polemic one might expect in a more sophisticated setting. By the end of the sermon the congregation had been sufficiently aroused to the point that a number of worshippers were able to offer prayers filled with thanksgiving and praise to God for such a wonderful birth. And all of it so delightfully certain and unproblematic.

At the end of the service, the children of the Kungiyar Yan Kirista, a children's group for studying the Bible, came forward and recited a few verses and sang a few songs. They performed quite unabashed and had little trouble with self-consciousness. Whether they actually understood what they were reciting in the Hausa trade language is another question, of course. The point was to recite and that they did well.

After the service the people once again lined for the inevitable dance, but this time they headed for Iliya's compound, rather than that of the chief. The dancing was of short duration, for the sun was rising high and no one had as yet had his breakfast. We were brought our Christmas dinner, the menu being identical to that of the previous evening, except that there were beans mixed in with the rice.

About one o'clock or thereabouts the Christian women came to Iliya's compound, each with a tray on their head and on each tray was placed the traditional combination of two enamel pans, one of which contained pounded yam or guineacorn or corn, while the other contained the soup into which the food is dipped. This soup consists of either palm oil or peanut oil and some kind of meat with plenty of spices throughout. It turned out that this food was to be distributed among the non-Christian neighbours of the village. Iliya and his elders carefully considered where each portion should be sent and then a young girl would be assigned to carry it to the designated compound with the regards of the Christians. The poor were given special consideration. In this way the whole village participated to some extent in the celebrations. Whether the Muslims actually ate the food prepared by people who were until recently pagans, I never did find out.

After everyone had his Christmas fill, the village fell into a deep slumber for a few hours. Only a few children and chickens scuttled about until the sun lost some of his glare in the late afternoon. When the people came out of hiding once again it was time for gaisuwar Kirstmati — Christmas greetings. People would come to our house, squat on the floor, bow somewhat and then the exchange of greetings would begin:

How is your tiredness? No matter, there's no tiredness.

How was your trip yesterday? Fine, we encountered no trouble.

How is your Christmas in our village? We are grateful that God has brought us here.

After some more small talk, they would rise and go on to the next compound. A number of them left us some local gifts and by the end of the greeting session we had collected a bottle of milk from the court president, ten pounds of rice, some eggs, two pigeons, a duck and some bananas. That was the extent of our 1966 Christmas presents.

At about sunset the drummers re-appeared and it did not take them long to have all the young Christians and many pagans form a circle around them and once again pursue their favourite dances. It was again to go on till the early morning.

The next two days were rather uneventful. Every evening till early morning the young folk would be dancing and the day would be used for catching up on their sleep. The third day was designated as the final day of celebration.

This time the young appeared early in order to go to the bush and collect sticks and grass ropes used to indicate the borders of the **filin dina**, the field where the Christians would hold their communal Christmas banquet. Tables and chairs were brought, a throne was improvised for the master of ceremonies whose official title was "governor". Towards evening the women began bringing the by now familiar trays of food and covered them with colourful cloths to prevent the food from getting too cold. Various home-made uniforms began to appear, all indicating the wearer's official function at the banquet. Some were policemen or soldiers to keep order. There was a health official to ensure hygienic conditions. At the single entrance two young men were selling banquet tickets for sixpence. Those who could not afford this or who were not interested in participating could stand outside the ropes and watch the proceedings.

After the proper opening procedures had been conducted and the food been eaten, it was my turn to perform. I had previously been instructed that I was to preach at this **dina**, paying special attention to the pagans and Muslims watching us from the outside. My Hausa was still quite green so that the people had to be very sympathetic if they were to understand anything at all of what this European had to say. But Europeans were sufficiently scarce at Nyankwala that most would be willing to go the extra mile(s). I cannot boast any conversions, but, then, I did not expect any either. The reader may judge whether this lack of expectation was lack of faith or whether perhaps it had its cultural justification.

After the preaching session, the fun began. People were arrested by the mock police and hauled before a mock court for alleged offences such as infractions of proper banquet etiquette. I was brought before the court myself and fined one shilling. After much laughter and fun, the people wandered back to their compounds and the celebrations of 1966 were over.

John H. Boer,
S.U.M. Wukari, Nigeria.

*) The title is Hausa for "Christmas in Nyankwala."

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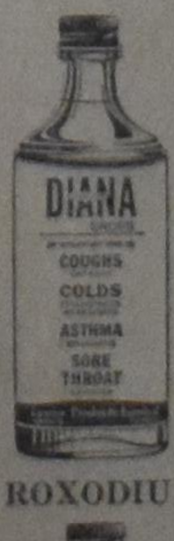

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God's Truth is Marching on !

(Continued from page 5)

lieve in a god and get tortured for it, that was their business. As far as she was concerned they might as well worship a tree trunk or the moon, that would be just as effective! Who gave them the right to endanger their whole barrack by their open religiosity? Nobody. It served them right that they had to pay for that with their own lives. It serves them right, Dasha repeated in herself. And yet . . .

The appearances of the nuns had shocked Dasha more than she wanted to admit. At first glance they had looked so pathetic, so pitiable. Yet it was not that. Dasha had seen worse ones. What had struck her so deeply was the expression of their eyes. They seemed to reflect everything that was noble on this earth: love, gentleness, peace, beauty, forgiveness . . .

There was no mirror in her barrack, but Dasha had seen her own face often enough reflected in some shiny machinery of the plant. Hers was a bitter face, dark and ugly with hate and hardness. Strange . . . she who wanted so desperately to live, hardly resembled a normal human being anymore, while those three nuns who seemed so ready to offer their lives, looked more human and more beautiful than anybody else she had known. Images of God. Dasha shocked up. Who had said that? She turned her head with a sudden jerk to the left, then to the right. A dog growled viciously. Nobody looked up. Every head was bowed down. Everyone was silent.

Images of God. Was it a phrase from her childhood, spoken by her old-fashioned religious grandmother?

Dasha did not know. Even more disturbed she kept on marching, her hands clenched into fists on her back, as if they would be able to fight off this unknown feeling of insecurity and dangerous doubt in her heart.

The hill was close to the brick plant and it was clearly visible for all prisoners.

"If you still refuse to work," Ivan had told the nuns, "you will watch the others work. I know a beautiful spot for you."

He had taken the nuns' scarfs, mittens and caps away and had ordered two guards to escort them to the top of the hill. As soon as the guards had done their duty, they retreated hastily, leaving the nuns to the mercy of the furious wind, which cut off their breath with its penetrating cold.

The guards were relieved that they had not been ordered to stay with the three women, not only because of the freezing temperatures, but mainly because they felt ill at ease in their presence. The meek attitude of the women confused them even more than their religious obstinacy. None of them had protested when part of their clothing had been taken away; none had panicked when they were told as to how they were going to die: freeze to death. All they had said was "God's will be done."

Suddenly the guards had felt dirty, ugly, empty. They had cursed, loud and angry, but the wind had snatched away their words.

When they walked quickly back to the plant where all prisoners were still waiting in rows of five, they felt as if the eyes of the three lonely figures on the hilltop were burning on their backs. Yet when one of them looked backwards, he felt strangely upset that none of the women were eyeing them; instead they had fallen on their knees and had folded their hands and bowed down their heads. They were praying again to their God! As if he could change the order of the commander! The guard gave a short, nasty laugh to hide his own uneasiness.

"Praying . . . they are praying," he called out loud. "Won't do them any good!"

His companion did not answer, but turned his head towards the nuns. Then he said with pretended indifference, "They should've been dead days ago . . . no one ever lived through what they experienced . . . but this time they go! The commander was right when he said to get it over with.

Gang 208 of Barrack SM 85 had been assigned to work for three hours in the mudpit. The guards on the watchtowers would be relieved after two hours, because of the extreme cold, but the prisoners, dressed in rags instead of sheepskin coats, and with only a small portion of food in their bellies, could stick it out an extra hour!

"They probably want us to freeze to death, too," Dasha said, while she hewed with her pick-axe in the frozen ground, in such a fury as if she was hacking at the guards.

"We're still better off than the nuns," Nastasja said. "At least we won't freeze as long as we keep on working hard. For them it's different." She looked at the nuns with deep compassion. To die like that . . . To die like that on Christmas day . . . Don't think about that, don't . . . , she told herself. Don't look at the nuns either. It won't help them and it won't help you. Work, work, work! The harder she worked, the warmer she would be and the sooner they could work in the plant. From behind the frost-covered windows of the factory no one would be able to watch the nuns. It certainly was no accident that it was their barrack today taking turns in the mudpits. Every inmate of SM 85 would be forced to witness the slow death of the nuns.

The hours dragged on. Nastasja's arms were as heavy as lead and every new time she had to force herself to raise them again.

The whole gang was quiet and subdued; even the five prisoners refrained themselves from using filthy language. Petrowna, one of them, shook her head in disbelief when looking at the kneeling nuns on the hilltop.

"They can't do that, they just can't let them die like that . . ." she said to no one in particular. "It's mean, it's rotten, barbaric . . ."

Dasha laughed cynically. "You've just arrived here," she said. "You don't know what they can do here. Wait a few more weeks, then nothing will surprise you anymore."

Petrowna shivered and went to work with her back to the hill. She had been a prostitute; a cheap, degraded woman who had been accused of having connections with anti-communist persons, which explained her presence in the slave labour camp. Yet, she was sentimental and a weak-hearted woman, never even inflicting physical pain on an animal, let alone on a human being. No wonder the treatment of the nuns chilled her to the bone. She was not the only one who was visibly upset by it. Most women of gang 208 were. And so was Nastasja. Almost against her will her eyes were drawn to the hilltop as a piece of iron to a magnet. The three kneeling figures on the hilltop moved her deeply. They had folded their bare hands with the fingertips together, which expressed reverence as well as surrender. They had lifted up their heads as if they indeed were talking and listening to Somebody Who stood on a higher platform. At times it seemed as if they craned their necks to be as close to Heaven as possible. They seemed to be unaware of the prisoners working in the mudpits. Not once did they look in that direction, not once did they avert their eyes from the dull grey sky over them.

Nastasja took a little rest. The three statue-like women on the hilltop increased her heartache. Maybe they were dead already . . . Who would know this from such a distance? If not they were dying slowly . . . The land around them was vast and white and flat. Not one living being was close to them; not even a bird was there to remind them that they were not completely alone, and that their fellow prisoners were thinking about them, and some even praying. But no one was able to walk up to them, to say a few words of encouragement, of sympathy. They were alone. Totally alone. Three dark, tiny dots in a frozen wilderness without boundaries, without mercies. Doomed to die for their God.

Suddenly Nastasja was reminded of another hilltop, where once, long ago, three crosses had stood. Golgotha. Jesus dying between two criminals. There were people at the foot of His cross, friends and relatives who loved Him, soldiers who did not care about Him and enemies who hated Him. Jesus had not died alone, surely not. And yet His cry of agony had echoed over Golgotha: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' '

With a flash Nastasja finally understood. The nuns, dying on the hill for their God, were not really alone. They were closer to Christ than anybody else of the prisoners! The One, Who had really been alone, Who had really been in hell, had been Christ Himself, Who had freely died for all believing mankind. The nuns praying on the hilltop were sheltered and safe because of what Christ had done for them. Nothing could really happen to them. Christ was with them. He had taken all their suffering. He knew their needs, their pain, their hardship, for He had been through it Himself, but much deeper, all the way to the bottom and alone, completely alone, forsaken by men and . . . by God. Out of love, pure love! The Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overwhelm it.

Suddenly Nastasje felt deeply ashamed. From the moment she had opened her eyes this Christmas morning, her thoughts had been occupied with herself. She had questioned if God really understood their needs and misery, their suffering, while His own Son had suffered more than a human being could ever comprehend. Instead of worshipping her King and Saviour this Christmas morning, she had cried; instead of praising Him with thankfulness, she had grumbled and complained . . .

A rough command from a guard shocked her up from her thoughts and made her reach for her pick-axe. The strength in her arms had come back and the pain in her back had lessened. While she laboured to loosen the hard soil, her heart filled with gratitude and joy.

The workday had come to an end and dulled by hunger and tiredness the prisoners walked almost automatically to the plant's compound and filed into rows of five to be counted and marched off to the camp, like any other day. But this day was not like any other day, for there on the hilltop were the three statues of the nuns, motionless and covered with snow. The end had come then.

Quietly the women took their places, drained of all energy, of all hope. What had they expected?

The sky had cleared and the first early stars were tiny specks in the quickly darkening sky. The wind had calmed down and the cold seemed less severe than it had been in the morning. It was not before the women all had lined up that they noticed the strange behaviour of the guards. A group of them were talking together. More and more guards joined them. Their faces were taunt and their eyes often went into the direction of the hill with visible fear. They had slung their rifles casually over their shoulders, as if they had become useless objects. The watch dogs, relieved of their command, roamed impatiently around, anxious as they were to go home to a good meal.

"It's the nuns," Petrowna said. "They are scared to move their bodies. I saw one guard coming back from the hilltop, just when I came outside. He was running as if he'd seen a ghost. No wonder. It is something terrible to . . ."

Suddenly Nastasja grasped her arm. "Look! Look!" she said and her voice was hoarse with emotion. "They are moving! They are getting up! They are still alive!"

An awesome quiet fell over the whole compound. As in trance the guards as well as the prisoners gazed at the hill, where suddenly three snow-covered figures seemed to have come back to life. The nuns stood up straight and brushed the snow off their clothes and each other's back. They jerked their heads to shake the snow out of their hair and then, slowly, as if in a procession, they started to descend the hill, their bodies tall and their walk steady, without stumbling or limping. The nuns came closer and walked next to each other when they approached the compound.

Still nobody spoke. The dogs felt uneasy and sought quickly the company of the guards with their tails between their legs. The nuns were close now. A beatific smile on their faces radiated warmth and heavenly beauty, yet their whole beings expressed humility and meekness.

They passed the guards, who had fearfully stepped back. Some of them hastily removed their woollen hats. A few slowly crossed themselves, awkwardly, since it had been so long ago that they used this sign of reverence. All were scared, scared for this mysterious Power which had kept three women warm and healthy for more than eight hours in sub-zero temperatures and freezing wind.

The nuns paid no attention to the guards, they walked with great dignity to the first row of women and filed in as if they, too, had just fulfilled the day's quota in the brickplant, and were now ready to go back to the camp. The nuns turned around and looked at the waiting women who were still staring at them with solemn admiration.

"Christ is with us all," the oldest one said. "He came to earth centuries ago, but He is still with us here today. With Him we never have to be afraid. If we believe in Him, then every day of the year is Christmas. Regardless of where we are . . ." she added softly. Then a bright smile swept over her face and her arms reached heavenwards in abundant joy: "Glory to God in the highest!" Her words were a jubilant song.

"Glory to God in the highest! Glory to God in the highest!" the women repeated. It went from mouth to mouth, from row to row. "Glory to God in the highest!" Soon the sky was filled with the angelic song. It vibrated in the air, it swelled like huge ocean waves to a majestic and humble praise and the wind took it and blew it far over the vast, white, darkening land.

The nuns started to walk with brisk, firm steps and row after row followed, tired, rag-dressed women, forgetting their hunger and coldness, for a new hope had come in their hearts and had given them new strength and courage to go on.

The guards walked together, afraid as they were to take their places near the prisoners. Instead of giving commands, they followed, instead of guarding the prisoners, they felt watched and cornered themselves. No one would've dare to use his rifle to bring the women back under their control. All their rifles were useless at a time like this.

Suddenly someone started to sing. Nobody knew later on who it had been, but it had been one from Barrack SM 85. It was an old Croation Christmas song: . . . On a cradle lowly, in a prickly stall, Lies the Baby holy, Who will save us all, Who will save us all . . .

The chorus fell in, then other Christmas carols followed in Russian, Polish, Czech, German, Hungarian; each group sang the old, sometimes half-forgotten carols in their native language and yet they all blended together in such a melodious song of praise, that no composer or conducter could have created more rapturous beauty, for the songs same straight from the hearts.

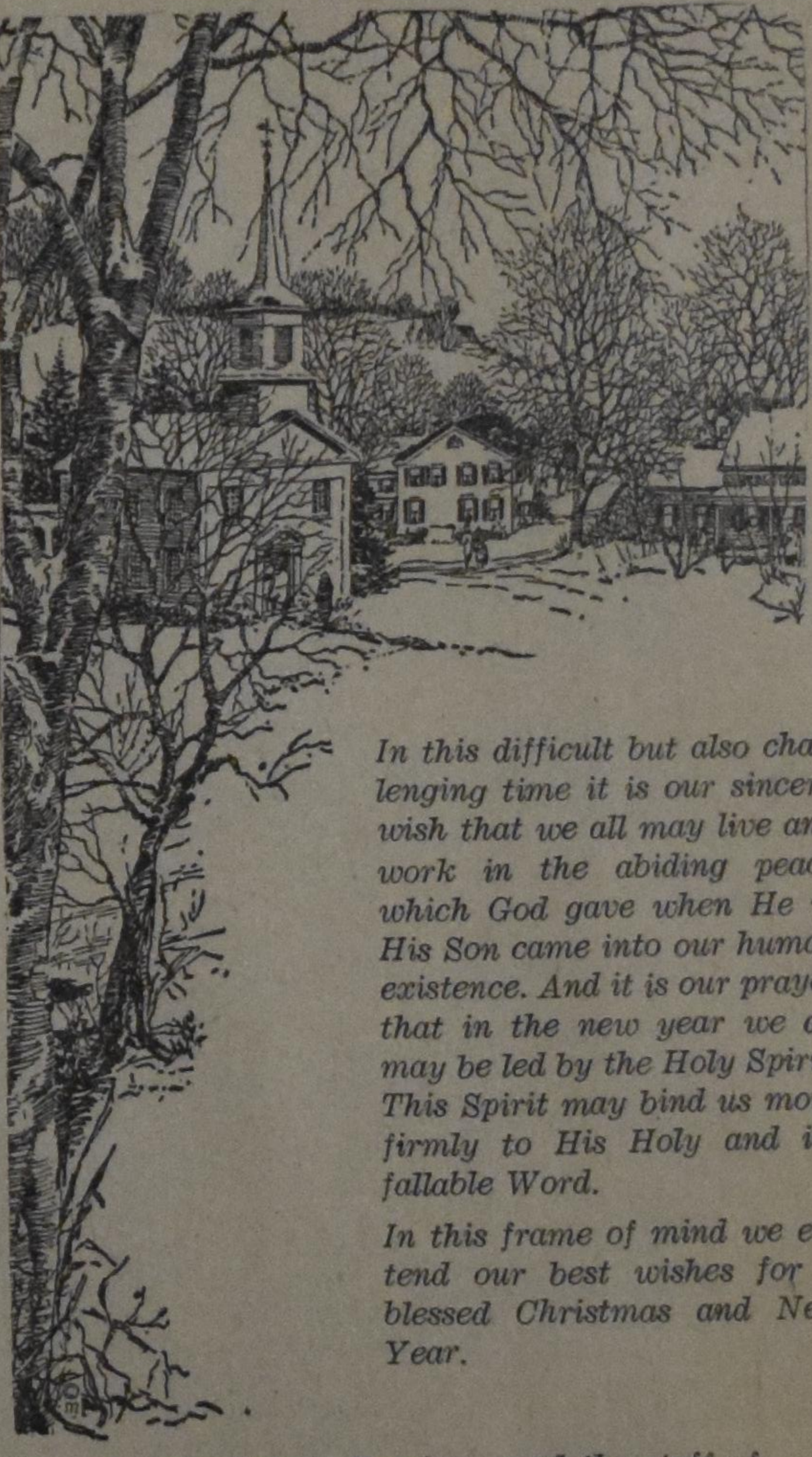
Nastasja sang as she had never sung before. Something great and glorious had happened today and was happening every day again without interruption. Only now she had understood it: God's truth was marching on and could never be stopped.

Dasha did not sing. She pressed her lips tightly together. It was so easy to be swept away by waves of sentiment and childish emotion. She didn't want to have any part of it. But her heart cried with jealousy and loneliness when it slowly dawned on her that these nuns were free, completely free in the truest sense of the word.

Ineke Parlevliet

P.S. This is a fictitious story and all characters involved are imaginary, except for the three nuns.

In his book: "I found God in Soviet Russia", the American author John Noble, mentions that just before he arrived in Vorkuta as a slave labourer, three nuns, who had refused to work for the communists, had been cruelly tortured and had finally been exposed for three days to the bitter cold of the Arctic. Yet they survived miraculously. Since that time no guard dares to interfere with their religious beliefs anymore, and so they were left alone, free to serve God the way they wanted.



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FOR THE CHILDREN

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY

"Well, if you all know that I just hate it" said Yvonne angrily, "then why can't we stay here in the city for Christmas? Why in the world do we have to go all the way to Grandpa and Grandma's house, and stay there till after New Year's? I'll miss all the fun here with my friends, I'll miss Doreen's pyjama-party, and I can't sing in the choir here on Christmas Eve; and Mom, I told you there's even a good chance the director will ask me to sing a solo!"

Yvonne paused for a moment, to catch her breath, and mother interrupted her upset and excited daughter. "I've explained it all to you before," she answered patiently, "but I'll do it once more, and then I don't want to hear anymore about it. You know that Grandpa and Grandma come here every year to celebrate Christmas with us. But you also know that the doctor told Grandma that she shouldn't travel the two hundred miles this year to our house, since she hasn't been feeling so well lately. Is it too much to ask then that we go to their farm this year? You always love it there, and so do the boys, and so do Dad and I. It'll be a nice change for Dad and for me, and Dad really needs to get away from the business for a while. I'm sure Grandma has already found some girls for you there to chum around with — she always does when you visit them. Grandpa and Grandma have a church in their village too, you know. I'm sure they'll let you sing in the choir. Now, you'd better help me with all the packing, and start smiling again!" And Mom patted her only daughter on the head and changed the subject.

Five minutes later Glenn and Robert burst into the kitchen. "Mom, don't forget to tell Dad to take his skates to Grandpa's, and what are we going to do with the cat?" shouted Glenn.

"Come on Robert, let's start packing our hockeysticks and skates!" and without waiting for an answer, ran to his room.

Mom smiled. When Glenn was in the house there was always a lot of noise.

"Yeh Mom, can we take Blackie?" Robert asked.

Mom answered, "We'll I guess we have no choice, but let's hope she gets along with King, Grandpa's dog!"

The next few days passed very quickly. A few Christmas presents had to be bought yet, clothes had to be packed, but this year there was no need to get a Christmas tree.

"Do you think Grandpa will get his own Christmas tree in the woods behind the farm?" wondered Glenn. His father said, "I have a feeling that he will wait till we get there, so you boys can help him. And Yvonne, I'm sure you will be very good at decorating the tree, you do it every year here!"

Yvonne didn't bother answering, and so her Dad asked surprised: "Are you still disappointed that we don't stay home this year? Come on girl, smarten up, don't walk around with an angry face all day!"

"Yeh, is she ever a grouch!" cried Robert, "she wouldn't even make my bed this morning! And I had dried the dishes for her last night, when it was her turn!"

"Yeh, and she slapped me for no reason at all. I only borrowed her ballpoint and I forgot to give it back to her!" added Glenn, "Boy, is she ever cranky lately!"

"That's enough boys!" said Dad, "let's try to make it a happy holiday for everybody else, we have lots of reasons to be thankful when we remember that Jesus was born."

Yvonne turned around and went to her room and flung herself on the bed. Oh, it just wasn't fair! Why did she have to come along, while she would much rather stay here? She could stay at Doreen's house, Doreen has asked her mother. But Mom wouldn't hear of it. Why did you always have to obey and do what your parents said when you were young? Grandpa and Grandma were alright, and she always liked to hear them talk together. Sometimes they would speak German together, they had come to Canada from Germany when they were teenagers, but they had not forgotten their native language. Yvonne already knew several words in German. Only this time, she was convinced that she wouldn't have any fun. And it was really Mom and Dad's fault.

An hour later she heard her mother call, "Yvonne, come down-stairs, we're leaving!" Ten minutes later the family was on their way.

"I just can't wait to taste Grandma's home-made bread!" said Mom several hours later, "Another ten miles children, and we'll be there!"

The car passed through a small town, and Glenn and Robert danced up and down on the seat.

"There's the church!" cried Glenn.

"And there's the country road that leads to the farm!" cried Robert, "A few more hills, Dad, and we'll see the farm!"

The farm looked like a picture, the fields were covered with snow, and the crisp winter air made everybody feel very much alive.

"It's like coming home again," sighed Mom contently, and then the frondoor opened and Grandpa welcomed his family with a big smile on his face, and Grandma already had supper prepared. Soon everybody sat down at the table in the big, cozy kitchen, which smelled of home-made bread and apple pie and Christmas pudding. Everybody was so busy talking that nobody noticed that Yvonne was still very quiet.

"Where's King?" asked Robert suddenly, when he saw Blackie sound asleep in a basket under the table, and Grandpa laughed, "King will have to live in the barn for the next week or so, he simply hates cats, but we'll take him out every day. We'll start tomorrow morning when we cut down our own Christmas tree!"

"Do we sleep in the same bedroom upstairs, where we always sleep?" Glenn wanted to know, and Grandma nodded.

"Yvonne sleeps in the room next to your room; we moved the piano to the den, Yvonne, that's closer to the kitchen. Do you want to play some Christmas carols for us, while your mother and I do the dishes? You know how I love to hear you play!"

Yvonne blushed a little, had Grandma already noticed that she wasn't happy? But so what, why pretend, the sooner Grandpa and Grandma knew the better. "I think I'll unpack my clothes first," she answered, "I don't feel like playing now." Upstairs she looked at the beautiful new dress Mom had made for her. All her friends at home would have admired it, but it wasn't much fun showing off a dress here to girls you hardly knew.

"Do you want to phone Ann?" asked Grandma, when Yvonne entered the kitchen again," she knows you're coming, and she wants to go with you to the Christmas concert tomorrow night."

"I'd rather read," answered Yvonne, and she disappeared into the livingroom.

"Do you want to come with us and get the Christmas tree Yvonne?" asked Grandpa the next morning, as he entered the kitchen and warmed his cold hands on the hot coffeecup Mom put in front of him. "It's a beautiful day, but we're supposed to get more snow tonight."

"Hurray!!" shouted the boys, but Yvonne barely looked up from the book she was reading. "That's no job for a girl," she answered, and Robert shrugged his shoulders and told Grandpa, "No use talking to that one, Grandpa, she's been cranky all week!"

Grandpa said nothing, but he gave his granddaughter a searching look. Outside, a little later, Glenn suddenly had a brilliant idea. Why not tease that sister of his a little? She had no right spoiling every-body elses good time. His eyes started to sparkle, as he went over to his brother and started to whisper. "Let's put Blackie in her bed tonight," he suggested, "boy, is she ever going tc scream when she feels something moving under her blankets."

"No, the cat can choke to death" warned Robert, "Cats need air too, you know!"

"Well, you come up with something then," said Glenn, and Robert was very quiet for a minute.

"I got it, I got it!!" he shouted all of a sudden, and Grandpa asked surprised, "What did you get Robert?" but Robert only looked at him with his eyes full of mischief and promised: "You'll see, Grandpa, it's a secret."

That night the three children went to bed very early. This country air made one very sleepy, and Grandma had told the children to get up early the next day to decorate the tree. Mom was surprised that her two sons did not protest when she sent them upstairs, but she did not know what went on inside the bedroom.

"After Mom has kissed us goodnight, I'll get dressed again, and sneak out through the backdoor to the barn to get King, and bring him upstairs," whispered Robert. "That's the hardest part, to get King here."

Everything went according to plan. Mom went downstairs, after she had talked to Yvonne for a moment, not knowing that her two sleepy sons were still wide awake.

Ten minutes later Robert opened the bedroom door very softly and in walked the big shepherd dog. "Now be quiet," whispered Robert, "Lay down King, here's a bone for you, just don't bark." King enjoyed himself very much. Two boys to play with, and a bone to chew on. What more could a dog want?

"It's very quiet and dark in Yvonne's room," whispered Glenn, after he had walked on tippytoes to the adjoining bedroom, and peeked through the keyhole. "I'm almost sure she's asleep!"

"I'll get Blackie," answered Robert, "I put her in the livingroom tonight, in her basket, the others always sit in the den at night. Wish me luck!"

Two minutes later he knocked softly on Glenn's bedroom door. "Come quickly with King," he whispered, and he opened the door of Yvonne's room just a little, and gave Blackie a little shove, so the cat could go inside the room. Then he quickly shut the door. Ten seconds later Yvonne's door was opened again, and this time a German shepherd walked inside. Then it started!! A dog started to bark and bark, a cat started to hiss and scratch, and above all the noise and confusoin Yvonne started to scream, while Mom and Dad and Grandpa and Grandma came running upstairs.

"What's going on?" cried everybody, and Dad turned on the light and everybody saw a sobbing girl, an angry dog and a furious cat.

"Get King out of here!" cried Grandma, and Grandpa grabbed him by the collar and dragged the excited animal downstairs, while Mom carried Blackie back to her basket.

"Those boys, those miserable boys," cried Yvonne. "I was sound asleep, and there was this terrible racket. I'll get even with them, where are they?" and she ran to their bedroom while Dad and Grandma followed. "They are under the bed!" cried Yvonne, and sure enough, two giggling boys appeared after Dad ordered them to get up.

"Well, she's been so cranky, she deserved it," said Robert defend-ing himself and his brother. Dad gave them a lecture, but had trouble keeping a straight face. The whole thing seemed so terribly funny after all, it was just a trick they had played on their sister.

You'd better take turns drying the dishes tomorrow," he told the two culprits, "and give your sister a day off, she deserves it after such a scare."

"Yvonne, I'd like to talk to you," said Grandpa suddenly, and he took Yvonne by the hand, walking back to her own room. "You're still angry and disappointed that you couldn't stay in the city, aren't you?" he asked kindly. "It will be Christmas in two days, don't you think you're hurting yourself the most? At this time of the year especially, we think of all the blessings God has given us. Have you thought about that yet? I haven't heard you play the piano yet, and I didn't hear you sing once. And you have such a lovely voice. There's an old German proverb, it goes like this: 'Böse Menschen haben keine Lieder.' That means: 'Angry people have no song.' There's so much to sing about, Yvonne! Your brothers were teasing you tonight. It's their way of saying: 'Come on, have some fun with us!' Think about it."

Grandpa left the room and went quietly downstairs to join the others. Yvonne crawled back into bed, and pulled the blankets over her face. But sleep would not come. And slowly, she began to be sorry for the way she had acted. It really wasn't any fun to be cranky, nobody paid much attention to it anymore, and it was pretty boring reading a book all day long. Actually, she really loved this old farmhouse and her grandparents, and she was spoiling the holidays for herself and for others. Yvonne fought against her stubbornness, but all of a sudden she made up her mind; she put on her robe and slippers and softly went downstairs. She hesitated for a moment, what would everybody say, but then she quickly opened the door of the den. Four people looked at her curiously, but Yvonne announced: "I can't sleep after all the noise those two animals made, and I like to practice some Christmas carols. May I play the piano for a while, Grandma?"

"Gladly, my child," answered Grandma smilingly, and a few minutes later everybody joined Yvonne in singing the old familiar Christmas carol: "Joy to the world, the Lord has come," with Yvonne's voice singing clearly above all the other voices.

B. Hosmar.

C. PARLEVLIET

Niagara Falls, Ont.

IMPORTEUR VAN

SEA GULL

HOLLAND HERRING

WENST ALLEN

een Gezegend Kerstfeest

EN EEN

Voorspoedig 1971 toe.

The Christmas Story

Long, long ago, Jesus was born
On that sacred Christmas morn.
He was born upon the hay,
And that is where He was to lay.

When the people heard of His birth,
Wise men came from across the earth.
They had followed His big bright star
They had traveled from afar.

Shepherds where in the fields near-by.
Angels came from God on high,
Telling the shepherds of the birth,
To tell the people around the earth.

Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus was her only child.
Mary laid Him in a manger,
And gladly greeted every stranger.

Thank You

Thank you dear Lord, for
Coming from above.
And saved us from sins,
With Thy amazing Love.

by Harry Veuger
Age 12
Red Deer, Alberta

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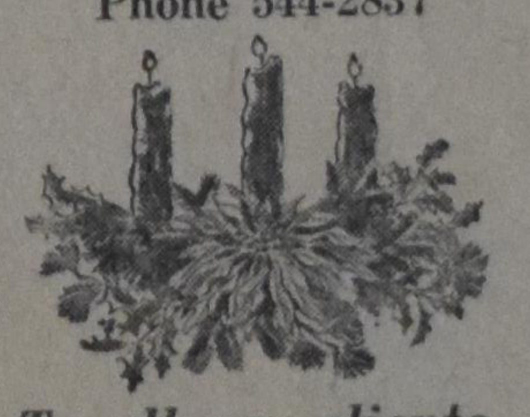


To all our clients, greetings for Christmas and a happy New Year

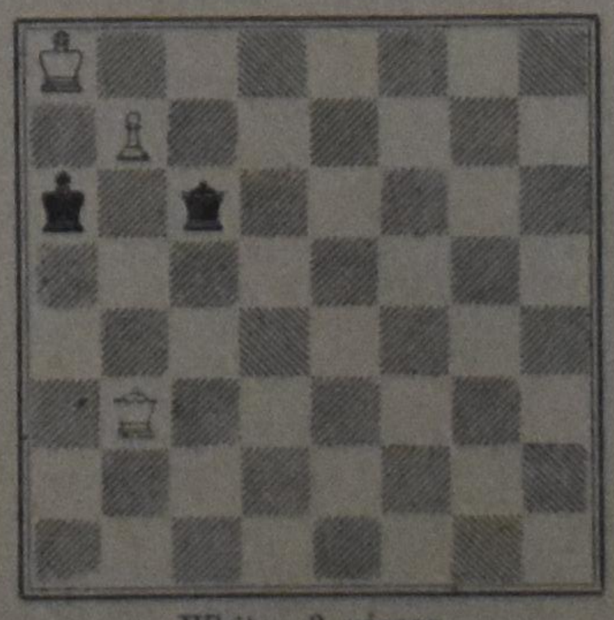
Let's Play Chess

Editor: Mr. C. Hess

FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT

The Ending I present this time is very interesting. It was made by the Dutchman L. VanVliet and was published in 1888 in the German chess paper "Deutsche Schachzeitung". Although being that old, this ending is still attractive in our century. You should have a good look at this miniature and try to solve it before you read on through the given solution.

Black: 2 pieces



White: 3 pieces

In most cases K plus Q against K plus Q is a solid draw. In this case however, the far advanced Pawn makes all the difference, but it stands badly pinned and the Queen has to cover it. Which key-move should her majesty make? She must make a choice between N1, N2, and N4. 1. Q-N4 is not only the best but also the only winning key of the three. Because the black Q cannot leave diagonal B3-R8 the keymove results in three variations in which White unpins the Pawn, sacrificing the Queen to deflect Black's. It is just startling and fascinating.

a. 1. —, Q-Q4 or B6; 2. Q-R4ch, K-N3; 3. Q-N3ch!, QxQ; 4. P-N8/Qch.

b. 1. —, Q-N7; 2. Q-R3ch, K-N3; 3. Q-N2ch!

c. 1. —, Q-R8; 2. Q-R3ch, K-N3; 3. Q-N2ch, K-B2; 4. Q-KR2ch!

Dutch: a. 1. Db4, Dd5 of f3; 2. Da4ch, Kb6; 3. Db3ch.
b. 1. Dg2; 2. Da3ch, Kb6; 3. Db2ch.
c. 1. Dh1; 2. Da2ch, Kb6; 3. Db2ch, Kc7; 4. Dhch!

I wish all my contestants a happy
Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Christmas on Guam

Amidst the azure blue of the wide Pacific, ringed with the foaming coral reef, Guam appears as a welcome jewel to the traveler by boat or air. Engulfed amidst the clear blue, cloud-poked sky and the teeming, turbulent sea around it Guam rises out of the ocean as the crest of a mountain range breaking above the ocean's surface. The crest rises in peaks as high as fourteen hundred feet above sea level. Two hundred twenty-five square miles of land lie above the ocean surface and is now home to about 100,000 people.

Its tropical climate lends itself to lush vegetation year round. There are no active seasons since through the year the temperature does not vary more than five degrees. Daytime temperatures are always from 87-92 and night time brings temperature from 75-80 degrees. The opulent rains make the island densely green with the vegetation of the tropics. The sun-kissed flowers bloom every week of the year, each according to the times established by the Creator. Guam is an island of beauty and this tropical beauty is at its best during the Christmas season.

The seasonal trimmings of snow, sleds, and evergreens are not natives of Guam. However, swimming, surfing and Santas are. The commercialization of Christmas has raped Christmas of Christ and now it is not much more than Xmas for many. The toys, lights and Santas have come to Guam as well as the simple, solemn carol of "Silent Night, Holy Night."

The native people have been influenced by 300 years of Spanish religion and culture and this is still evident in the Christmas pageantry within the homes, community and church. And yet there is an awareness of the Christ, the Son of God incarnate among men. It is He that is worshipped in all the churches, chapels and Cathedrals on the island. The soul of the Guamanian is sensitive to these realities of God. Perhaps, the foreigners to Guam are less disposed to worship than the Chamorros.

Guam is not a pagan community. It has had the testimony of Jesus Christ for many years and great care is often exhibited to celebrate the holy days in proper manner. Thousands will attend Mass or worship in the church of their choice, others are discreetly quiet and sleep the day away.

By contrast the religious atmosphere on Guam is much akin to any community in the North American continent: there is worship, there is feasting, there is indifference. It is the hope of this author to stimulate the Guam community to greater, deeper spiritual union with Christ as Lord and Savior.

Beyond the boundaries of Guam, throughout the scattered islands of Micronesia, covering a vast body of Pacific water, there are different forms and ways of Christmas celebration. The island of Kusaie is an interesting picture to behold.

Kusaie is about 45 square miles in area with approximately 5,000 inhabitants. It is 1,400 miles Southeast of Guam — in essence it is at the end of the world. Boats visit the island on an irregular monthly basis. There are four small villages on the island, four churches (United Church of Christ) and at the beginning of the Advent season the four villages begin to practice their voices in praise. The villages compete annually in a music festival of Christmas anthems and to hear the singing is like the music of angels. There is no accompaniment, only the harmonizing of the various parts into anthems which bring tears to the eyes and lumps to the throat. The music festival is a full day affair and the whole island is present to listen, to judge, to worship, to fellowship, to thank God for Christ.

It is an oversimplification, but it is startling to behold the contrast of these people, who have so little of earthly goods, who must live off fish, taro and coconuts, and yet be so full of Christian joy and praise in comparison to us who have been blessed and prospered beyond appreciation and who so often are mute and indifferent about the joys of Christ. Perhaps too much earthly goods has made us insensitive to the great gift from on high, Jesus Christ.

Upon reflection, we notice that there is no substitute for Christ. Whether we live in Canada, the USA, Guam, or Kusaie we all have to accept that unspeakable gift, the Son of God, in order for us to experience the joy which is not bound to this life or to this time and place. We thank God that we are yet permitted to experience the presence and the reality of Jesus Christ with our fellow Christians across the face of the earth.

May the joys of Bethlehem be yours throughout the earth this Christmas season.

One in Christ,
Rev. Henry Dykema.

THE DYKEMA FAMILY
David Carol
Mark Cora Henry
Jennifer Brenda

THE WORLD AROUND US

Italy: The Problems of Governing

It was about ten years ago that the era of "quadripartito" coalitions came to an end in Italy. These were the governments formed from coalitions by the Christian Democrats, Liberals, Republicans and the Social Democrats. What followed after that was the so-called 'opening to the Left' with the Nenni Socialists playing a prominent role. But this period did not bring governmental stability either. From 1963 to 1968, during the five years of the Fourth Legislature, Italy had four governments: Giovanni Leone's for the first five months, then three successive Center-Left cabinets, all led by Premier Aldo Moro and Vice-Premier Pietro Nenni. During the first two years of the Fifth Legislature, from June 1968 to July 1970, one more Leone government lasting five months was followed by three Mariano Rumor cabinets.

It is really too complex and also too dull to go into the complex arrangements of the Italian political parties, how they split and reunite, how the communists have gained every election since 1945 except the last one, and how the Center-Left parties break up, form new alliances and try to come together again. There is now a great deal of discussion in Italy that the next era in government will be an 'opening to the Communists', i.e. a further move to the left in politics. As of yet, however, this has not taken place.

The problems of governing Italy do not lie solely in the parties. The economic and social background of the nation is much more to blame for the difficulties that are present within the nation. It is true that the Center-Left coalitions have been unable in the last few years to guide the economic life of the country with a firm hand. The cost of administration has gone up and its effectiveness and solvency have gone down. But then, the Italian economy seems more difficult to guide than that of other nations. The economic growth rate of five per cent a year is a fast rate, but not as fast as it could be. The growth rate is due to a notable extent to improved allocations of human resources, to people moving from farm to factory. But this will not last forever, and it also brings great problems with it. A faster growth rate would need greater investment, a containment of private consumption, and the improvement of those infrastructures (schools, housing, transport, health service) which make economic changes and the movement of population easier, while improving the quality of human capital.

The so-called 'structural reforms' would make economic growth easier, reduce the gap between private and public consumption and increase the country's social and political stability. So everyone is calling for reforms. But at the same time full employment in the developed areas (mostly in the north) has led to great pressure for increased salaries, reduced work hours and increased private consumption, but has also resulted in the waste of natural resources and the pollution of the environment. Those same unions that strike for 'structural reforms' against the government inaction are at the same time refusing any policy of wage restraint; they support to the utmost all the claims by state employees and industrial workers. The Center-Left governments have been unable to resist or choose between contradictory wage claims and demands for reforms. And what originally was the main raison d'etre of the Center-Left — the achievement of some fundamental social-economic reforms within the framework of a national plan — does not appear to have been accomplished yet.

The Italians themselves are not very eager to help the government either. The key word for the late sixties and early seventies seems to be "la contestazione generale" — a general protest and confrontation. Every individual and every social, economic or regional group appears to be convinced that only by violent and dramatic protest can its interests be defended, its demands satisfied. There have been riots for the 'normal' reasons such as unemployment and economic stagnation (as in Battipaglia and Avola). But other reasons for violent protest have been the reaction to a lost football game (Caserta), an expression of "bell-tower rivalries" between cities claiming the stature of capital of their new regions (Pessara and Reggio Clabria). There have been urban guerillas formed from the students and jacqueries from the peasants, and sometimes the two have joined hands. Even the more law-abiding social groups, like the top civil servants and the teachers, have paralized key activities of the state by strikes; often strikes among state employees have resulted from rivalries beween unions. Losses of production have been immense — in 1969 something like two per cent of the GNP.

The general weakening of authority seems to be a phenomenon which is afflicting all contemporary societies, but this is particularly so in Italy. Patriotism is a word which has long been dead in Italy and this increases the general mood of scepticism, uncertainty and creates a morality of "everyone-for-himself".

Some people blame the Communists for this demoralization, but others maintain that they are simply 'riding the tiger', that the demoralization is just there and that the Communists are taking advantage of this fact. It is true that Italian society is terribly rich with contradictions; it is also true that the Center-Left coalition was not easy to keep together and that the problems of having the Socialists as a partner in the government caused many strains. But even so, it is the duty of a government to give leadership and to point the nation into a certain direction, and this the Center-Left has not done in the last few years. They have been more content to follow what seemed to them to be the drift of the nation, and this has not worked.

For this reason there is a growing number of people who think that an alliance with the Communists will come about in the near future. They point to the fact a 'rapprochement' between Catholics and Communists has already taken place in some regions, such as red Emilia, as well as among the worker's unions and among intellectuals. Others fear that such a compromise on the national level could all but kill the vitality of Italy's democratic life. And nobody is willing to predict who in the end would come out on top, whether the Catholic or the Leninist party. There are some members of the Catholic Left, and also some Socialists, who feel that it will be possible to work with the Communists and that, in time, they could transform them into a democratic party. The idea might be tempting, but it would be the first case in history of this taking place and the chances seem remote that it will ever occur.

Others are more optimistic and feel that the Center-Left coalition is not finished yet. Since Emilo Colombo managed to form a government during the summer — bringing the four coalition parties together once again — there is hope that the situation might be saved yet. Some of Italian workers' unions are trying for a greater political involvement which should make them more responsible. Plans for reforms have made important progress in Parliament and are being transformed in some fields into reality. The tentative dialogue between government and unions could create a sort of participatory democracy. There are enough physical and human resources in the nation to achieve the construction of a more just and equal society. But in order to achieve this, the common good will have to come before the individual good, and this is a difficult task for all human beings.

J. J. Bout.

Cease Fire!

Cease Fire! An order given again. And soldiers sigh: How long will this one be?

They may relax tense muscles, for a time. And not seek rest in sleep, with senses still alert.

For who knows how soon the word may come to move.

Cease Fire!

How often has the word been spread? The latest one in Palestine where Jew and Arab will not cease until their side has won.

Cease Fire!

In Vietnam at Christmas time — A much too short a time of peace, where men could almost see the fires of enemy lines, as they prepared their Christmas meal. A few brief hours —

to try to find — a peace — perhaps within one's mind. A peaceful thought of home and friends —

And then a prayer: Oh God, let there be Cease Fire when I return again. Back home the bullets fly, the hatred rises high. Here we are all alike, black, white, whatever our background — matters not.

We help each other through this hell, and when the need arises, we'll carry on our backs the wounded ones and ask not of the colour of his skin.

Now it is Christmas and we want to sing our "Silent Night". We look up at the velvet sky and wonder if God sees us here below.

The mail and magazines from home remind us of so much to do — to clean up all that's wrong down here.

The sky back home is blotted out they say by clouds of smoke and smog so thick that men can't breathe.

Here too at times the clouds are thick with smoke of bombs and shells, to darken the sun and make us choke.

But we have ceased to fire to sit a while and think. Why am I here? What am I fighting for?

They tell us that we fight for peace. For peace both here and for our homes. It's almost comical when all I want to do is cry to God above:

Help us to make a Cease Fire last — not only here but everywhere —

Dear God — —
The words stick in my throat — until I reach the last line of the song: Sleep in Heavenly Peace, and suddenly I see it clear:

If only man will look up to the sky and take their eyes away from self — If only we can bring a bit of Heaven's influence to bear to the burdens of the earth — then we too may sleep — a peaceful sleep —

Cease Fire! It can last and we can have our sleep in

Heavenly peace.

Mrs. E. Sneep.

Nigeria Mexico

India U.S.A.

for Christ's sake!

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Hamilton, Ont.

With grateful hearts we announce the birth of

STEPHEN DOUGLAS

on November 12, 1970.

A brother for James Edward.

John & Gertie Krale.

Petrolia, Ont.

Hank and Ida Abma, nee Simonse, announce the arrival of their chosen daughter:

DOROTHY ANN

born 27-11-'66.

A sister for John & Richard.

343 Boisdale Ave.,
Richmond Hill, Ont.

With thanks to God and great joy we announce the birth of

PETER HENRY

born November 29, 1970.

A brother for Peggy and Wilma.

Henk and Liz Nienhuis.

671 Upper Paradise Rd.,
Hamilton, Ont.

We thank God who has made us so rich through the birth of our twin sons

JASON ARTHUR — 7 lb. 6 oz.
and
MATTHEW HANLEY — 6 lb. 12 oz.

Born on December 1, 1970.

Two brothers for Carolyn.

Jeff & Christina Wubs
(nee Schaafsma).

849 Wallace Wynd,
Port Moody, B.C.

With joy and gratitude to God we announce the arrival of another adopted son who came to us on December 3rd, 1970

TIMOTHY RYAN

born November 21st, 1970.

Rev. & Mrs. Cornelis Pronk,
4057 - 248th St., R.R. 3,
Aldergrove, B.C.

A brother for David.

"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord" - Psalm 127:3.

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Vandersteen are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter

LINDA
to
Mr. MENNO FLUIT

son of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Fluit, Ancaster, Ontario.

The wedding will take place Saturday, December 19, 1970, the Lord willing, in the Maranatha Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines, Ontario.

Rev. Verlyn Verbrugge officiating.

Mr. LEENDERT G. MORAAL
and
Mrs. DINI BIEWENGA,
nee VENINGA

are pleased to announce their forthcoming marriage, which will take place D.V. on Saturday, December 26, 1970 at 4 p.m. in the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, 63 Church Street East, Brampton.

Rev. P. M. Jonker officiating.

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We sincerely thank all our relatives and friends, who remembered us on the occasion of our 35th wedding anniversary and appreciate the many tokens of love and friendship.

Mr. & Mrs. JOHN VRIEND.

Maassluis 1930 Strathroy 1970

On Friday, December 18, the Lord willing, we hope to celebrate with our parents and grandparents

HENDRIK VAN VLIET
and
JOHANNA VAN VLIET
(nee DE GEUS)

their 40th wedding anniversary.

We thank the Lord for his care and guidance in the past and pray that He will grant them continued health and happiness together in the years to come.

Their grateful children:

Bep and Kees Van Oosterom,
Joanne, Ricky, Carolyn,
Sarnia, Ont.

John and Linda Van Vliet,
Alice, Joyce, Henry, Debbie,
Sarnia, Ont.

Cor and Bep Van Vliet,
Jeanne,
Strathroy, Ont.

Henry and Alta Van Vliet,
David,
London, Ont.

241 Metcalfe St.,
Strathroy, Ont.

"Praise God for He is good."

Groningen, Dec. 7, 1945, the Lord united in marriage our dear parents and grandparents

GERRIT BROUWER
and
IDA BROUWER—BAAS

The Lord willing we will celebrate this happy event on Dec. 29, 1970 at 8 p.m. at the Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church, Mohawk Rd. W., Hamilton, Ont. Everybody welcome.

Hamilton, Ont.:
Kay & Dennis DeVries.
Kitchener, Ont.:
Ted & Sari Brouwer.
Hamilton, Ont.:
Jane & Ted Groenewegen.
Amsterdam, Holland:
Philip & Teuna Brouwer.
Toronto, Ont.:
Elsie & John Boersma.
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Irene & Rodger.
Grand Rapids, Mich.:
Gerda.

And 14 grandchildren.

420 West 5th St.,
Hamilton, Ont.

Uit genade alleen zijt gij zalig geworden. - Efz. 2:5

Heden nam de Here tot Zich, zacht en kalm, onze lieve vader, grootvader en overgrootvader

REIN HUISMAN,

in de gezegende ouderdom van 79 jaar. Sinds 29 oktober 1970 weduwnaar van Antje IJdema.

Maar in dit alles zijn wij meer dan overwinnaars door Hem die ons liefgehad heeft.
Rom. 8:37

Telkwa, B.C., Canada,
27 november 1970.

De bedroefden:

Smithers, B.C.:
G. Vander Schaaf—Huisman.
J. Vander Schaaf.
Ens, N.O.P.:
J. Tigchelaar—Huisman.
R. Tigchelaar.
Smithers, B.C.:
R. Huisman.
B. Huisman—Okkema.
Edmonton, Alta.:
O. Huisman.
R. Huisman—Plantinga.
Schettens, Fr.:
S. De Boer—Huisman.
H. De Boer.
Edmonton, Alta.:
K. Huisman.
S. Huisman—De Groot.
Telkwa, B.C.:
IJ. Huisman.
A. Huisman—Steeneveld.
Telkwa, B.C.:
R. Hiemstra—Huisman.
J. Hiemstra.
Edmonton, Alta.:
TJ. Breeuwsma—Huisman.
W. Breeuwsma.
Telkwa, B.C.:
An Huisman.
Smithers, B.C.:
A. Huisman.
I. Huisman—Groot.
Smithers, B.C.:
J. Huisman.
J. Huisman—Groot.

On December 2, 1970, after a lengthy illness, the Lord called into His glory our beloved wife, mother, and grandmother

DIEUWERKE HAMSTRA,

at the age of 63.

Beloved wife of Jan Zwart.

Psalm 23.

Strathroy, Ont.:
Mr. & Mrs. F. Graansma.
Mr. & Mrs. G. Graansma.
Holland Marsh, Ont.:
Rev. & Mrs. P. Breedveld.
Strathroy, Ont.:
G. Vander Meer.
Mr. & Mrs. W. Zwart.
Mr. & Mrs. B. Den Hartog.
Georgetown, Ont.:
Mr. & Mrs. J. Brent.
Strathroy, Ont.:
Mr. & Mrs. D. Klinker.
Peter Zwart.
Diane Zwart.
and 31 grandchildren.

The funeral service was held on December 5, 1970 in the East Christian Reformed Church of Strathroy, Ont.

31 Egerton St.
Strathroy, Ont.

December 2, 1970.

Na een langdurig maar geduldig gedragen ziekte behaagde het de Here tot Zich te nemen onze innig geliefde zuster, behuwdzuster en tante

DIEUWERKE ZWART (HAMSTRA),

op de leeftijd van 63 jaar.

Geliefde echtgenote van Jan Zwart.

Gezang 27:2 ber.

Strathroy, Ont., 2 dec. 1970.

P. Hamstra.
J. Hamstra (Renkema).
Lutjegast, Prov. Gron.:
S. J. Jongsma.
J. Jongsma (Hamstra).
Neven en Nichten.

After a lengthy illness the Lord has taken away our beloved son and brother

GERARD RICHARD OOSTERVEEN,

9 years old.

Rev. & Mrs. Gerald Oosterveen.
Harvey.
Jewel.

December 8, 1970.

Doon, Iowa 51235, U.S.A.

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The Next Issues of Calvinist-Contact

will be DATED	will be MAILED	Closing time for ADVERTISEMENTS
New Year Issue	December 23	December 18
January 7/14	January 8	January 6 noon
January 21	January 15	January 13 noon
January 28	January 22	January 20 noon

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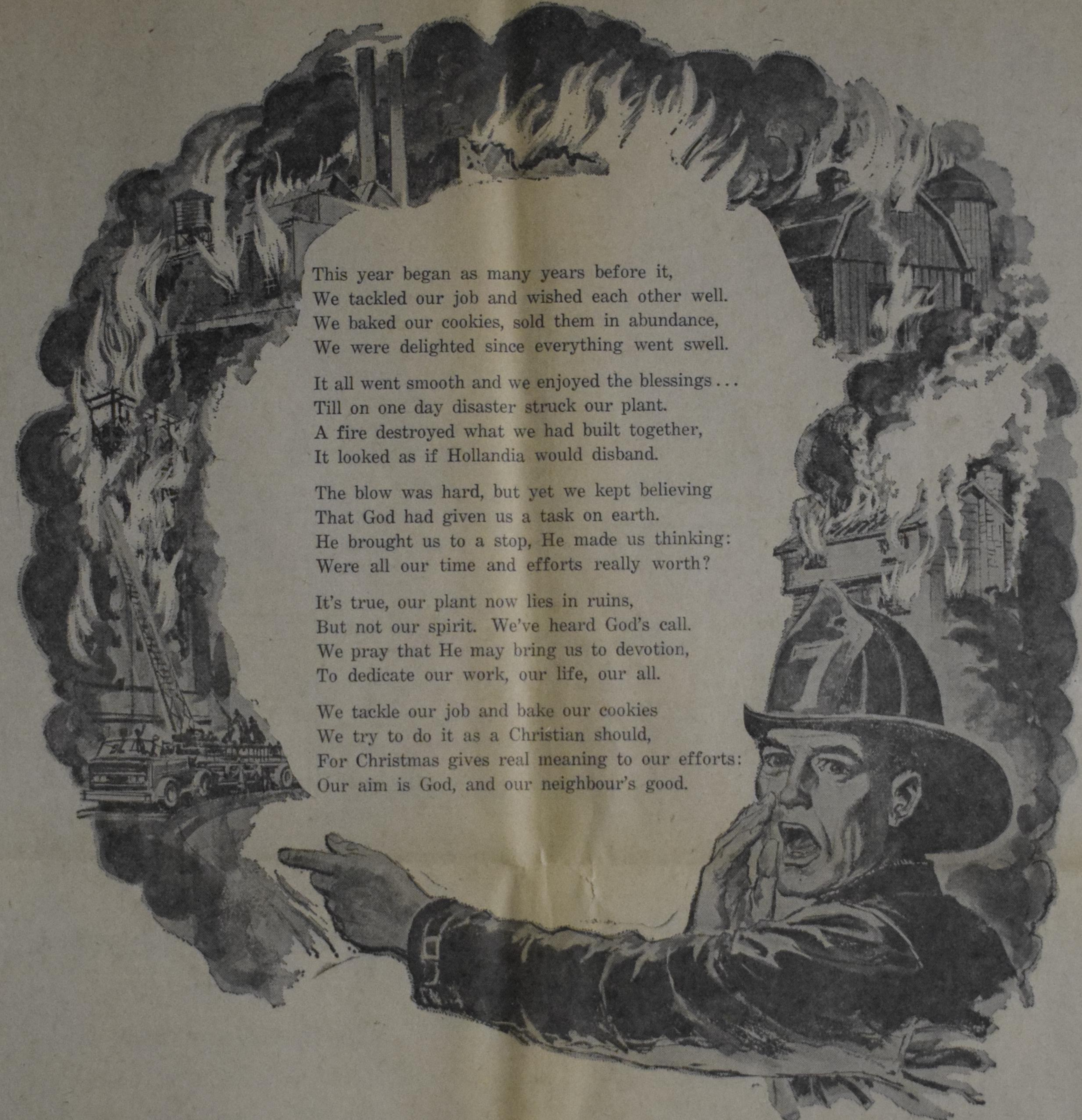

This year began as many years before it,
We tackled our job and wished each other well.
We baked our cookies, sold them in abundance,
We were delighted since everything went swell.

It all went smooth and we enjoyed the blessings...
Till on one day disaster struck our plant.
A fire destroyed what we had built together,
It looked as if Hollandia would disband.

The blow was hard, but yet we kept believing
That God had given us a task on earth.
He brought us to a stop, He made us thinking:
Were all our time and efforts really worth?

It's true, our plant now lies in ruins,
But not our spirit. We've heard God's call.
We pray that He may bring us to devotion,
To dedicate our work, our life, our all.

We tackle our job and bake our cookies
We try to do it as a Christian should,
For Christmas gives real meaning to our efforts:
Our aim is God, and our neighbour's good.

WITH BEST WISHES FOR A BLESSED CHRISTMAS

AND A

PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

FROM MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF

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